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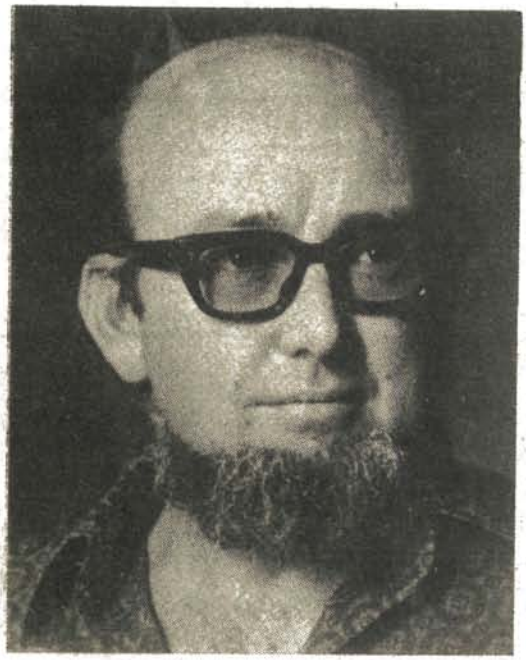

JANETTE T. HOSPITAL

THOMAS KENEALLY'S RELUCTANT PROPHETS

JOHN COGLEY 1916-1976

A SAMPLER FROM TWO DECADES OF WRITING IN COMMONWEAL

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NEWS & VIEWS

European Unity

Three and a half years ago, Western European leaders announced the aims of a European parliament by 1978 and a common monetary system by no later than 1980. What are the chances of these goals—or either one—materializing?

Not great, according to ex-*Commonweal* associate editor William Pfaff, writing from Paris in the April 12 *New Yorker*. By his estimate European unity is a practical impossibility but, paradoxically, a theoretical fact.

"The argument that Europe's political division is the source of insecurity and that Europe must be united in order to be safe has been made by virtually every non-Gaullist commentator and politician in Europe and the United States since the Second World War," says Pfaff.

"Yet Western Europe today is hardly closer to political unification than it was when the European Coal and Steel Community was established, in 1952, on the initiative of Robert Schuman. Even if no one in power will bring himself to articulate the choice that has been made, or perhaps will even dare admit that a choice has been made, Europe plainly has all the unity it wants—or all the unity it can bear. The calls regularly heard for new initiatives, the plans and studies made, the timetables proposed serve as universally acceptable substitutes for action that no one intends to take."

Indeed, maintains Pfaff, European unification is a diversionary topic. "Europe will not form a political union," he argues, "because Europe cannot possibly agree on what it wants to become. A united Europe has one, and only one, obvious form to take: that of a federation dominated by West Germany and France. They are the richest and most powerful of the European states, with the largest military forces, including, in France's case, the world's third-largest strategic nuclear force. But Franco-German hegemony is not the Europe that the Dutch, Danes, Belgians, and Italians have in mind, to say nothing of the British and Irish (to confine the discussion to the European Economic Community)."

But this is not necessarily fatal, in Pfaff's opinion, for "the truth is that unity already exists in Western Europe." It is, he says, the unity of a pragmatic commercial community, as well as the moral unity derived from what European civilization has endured in this century.

Of greater moment, he concludes, is the question of European-American relations.

In his words: "The real issue for Europeans today is how they are to accomplish the psychological transition (which is far more difficult than the practical one) out of a transatlantic dependence that can no longer, quite, be sustained by either Europeans or Americans."

Nuns for Patty

The Patty Hearst decision has drawn the fire of the National Coalition of American Nuns.

How can the trial have been just, the Coalition's newsletter asks, when Dr. Margaret Singer, the clinical psychologist attached to the University of California at Berkeley, was not allowed to testify in Patty Hearst's behalf?

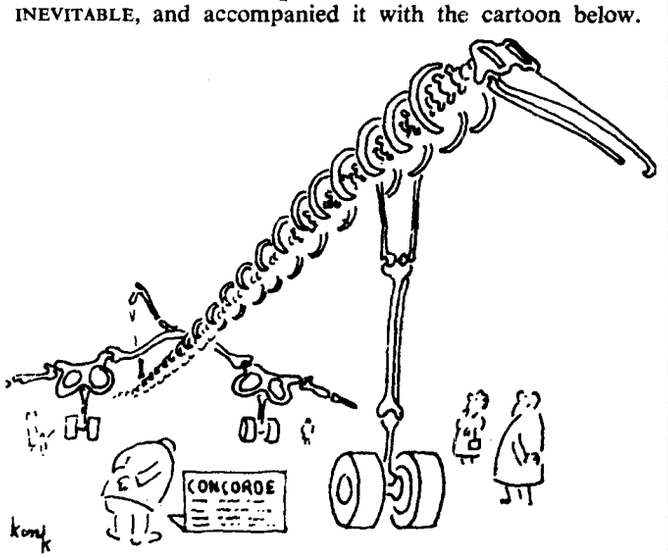
"Three [male] psychologists gave testimony," the newsletter notes, "but no man can know the violence of rape and what its effect is upon women. Only a woman can know and Judge Oliver Carter, who constantly told the jury to use their common sense, should have had that much common sense to know that Dr. Margaret Singer could have given insights which the men could not and did not. The defendant was locked in a closet for several weeks and raped repeatedly. The Prisoners of War (POWs) said that they would have done anything out of fear and in defense of their lives. From a woman's perspective, Patty Hearst's case must be appealed."

Counting Out the Concorde

When French and British officials asked for immediate studies on the future of the Concorde, they set off a process, in *Le Monde*'s opinion, which should lead to the stoppage of work on the Concorde "in a short time."

Says *Le Monde:* "Aeronautics experts are beginning to acknowledge, cautiously, that Concordes are too expensive to buy and run . . . that its range is too limited, its capacity too small, and that it is much too noisy for the comfort of airlines, passengers, or people living near airports."

Le Monde titled its report, CONCORDE: WAITING FOR THE INEVITABLE, and accompanied it with the cartoon below.



Much Ado About . . .

An advertisement in the Charlotte, N.C., daily press featured a picture of a bottle of King James scotch whiskey, flanked with the words "The" and "Version" to make the phrase "The King James Version."

It was enough to drive some people to drink.

Members of the Thrift Baptist Church at Paw Creek protested the ad as "blasphemous." Bob Jones, III, of Bob Jones University said he was "highly incensed."

As complaints mounted, the Charlotte papers canceled the ad. Publishers in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, O., St. Louis and Detroit followed suit.

Now let 'em get after *The New Yorker*. In a recent issue, it ran an ad featuring a quote from *Genesis XLIII*, with biblical illustration: *And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, myrrh, nuts and almonds. . . .*

The ad was placed by the T. M. Duche Nut Co. of Orland, Calif.

Odds and Ends

—The resolution before the priests' senate of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee proposed an expression of support for the Vatican's recent document on sexual ethics. By a vote of 22 to 7, the resolution was tabled.

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPOND-ENCE

Mixed Views

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Robert Phillips's review of my novel *A Hero in His Time* exhibits every characteristic of slap-dash reviewing [Mar. 26]. It is a pastiche, not a review. It doesn't matter to me that his views of the book are mixed. It is the mix that annoys precisely because the elements never congeal to form a review. Phillips seems to be among that growing tribe of reviewers who struggle for a point-of-view without ever achieving one. The most ludicrous waste of space is to conclude a review—painfully limited in scale as reviews must be—by discussing book binding, about which he knows about as little as he knows about criticism. If he had wanted to destroy my book it would have been as welcome as coherent praise, but wasting space to say precious little about anything seems to be an example of precisely the "conspicuous consumption" we are able, economically and culturally, to ill-afford.

ARTHUR A. COHEN

Raising the Issues

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Sisyphus must have much too generous an opinion about me, but I do appreciate the implied flattery and I would love to be able to live up to the thought [Darkness at Noon, March 12].

I do certainly agree with the view that coverage of the would-be Presidential candidates just seems to be obsessed with personalities and quirks and techniques, and we do have to look hard for a kernel about the candidates' thinking. Once in awhile you can draw some impression that means something from a revealing anecdote—like the one about Jimmy Carter the other day omitting Martin Luther King's name from his litany of Americans and then,

(Continued on page 319)

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CHURCH MONEY

The case of the Security National Bank of New Jersey has all the makings of an Auchincloss novel: mannered people with considerable international sums seeking to take over a small and, until recently, relatively obscure bank; more mannered people, one with a high papal decoration, seeking to block the take-over. . . . In the story line, allegations that the bank at one time routinely made unsecured loans to agents of the FBI; and now the beginnings of a federal investigation into possible manipulation of loan funds. . . . Spicing the whole, imposing church dignitaries and the suspicion that as much as three-quarters of the take-over fund comes from religious sources: one million dollars from a Rome bank in Switzerland with a link to the Vatican, and a half-million from a New Jersey Catholic order.

As we said, the perfect stuff of fiction. Except, of course, there is little or no fiction involved in this scenario. Precisely such a case has been in federal court in Newark in recent weeks, and on the front page of the *New York Times*. The press' focus has been largely on the loan aspects of the case, but equally intriguing is the seeming involvement of religious funds in the attempted take-over. It would take an international team of investigative reporters to sort out the claims and counterclaims of the respective parties. Nevertheless, enough has been conceded for the Security National Bank case to loom as another lesson on the necessity of more responsible uses of the moneys of religion.

The Security National Bank case does not appear to be a repeat of the Pallottine financial adventurism of the sort that exploded in newspapers last winter. It is much more subtle and, financially, much more modest. And if it does not speak as directly as did the Pallottine case to how sums raised for the needy are ultimately put to use, it does say something about the obligations of investors. These obligations are no

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less than those of the corporations themselves, whether banks or steel mills. There should be a justifiable social dimension not only in how profits are made and used, but also in how they are sought. In other words, the criterion is not—as attributed to one of the parties in the New Jersey bank case—whether the investment of religious funds is as safe as if it were in General Motors, but whether investment, return and uses are truly contributory to the common good. One of the truisms of modern finance is that religious groups have paid too little attention to the moral and ethical dimensions of their investment practices.

There has been improvement of late in the practices of some religious groups, primarily through the initiatives of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, at National Council of Churches headquarters in New York City. Some twelve Protestant denominations and eighty Catholic organizations are affiliated with the Center and involved in programs—such as stockholder challenges—concerned with the social impact of corporations at home and abroad and the application of social criteria to investments. Their concerns have ranged from agribusiness, to strip mining, to equal-employment opportunities for minorities and for women, and their successes have been significant. The Center, for instance, was instrumental in securing from International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) an agreement not to sell equipment to police and military in South Africa. But the work to be done is major before responsible investment becomes a reflex that outdoes anxiety for profit. And the task is not made simpler when those who should be the most sensitized are sensitive not at all.

JOHN COGLEY

As noted in these pages previously, John Cogley died on March 28 at the age of 60. Mr. Cogley was an editor here from 1949 to 1955 and served as a columnist until 1964. A memorial Mass for him will be celebrated at 6:30 P.M. on Friday, May 14. Place: St. Joseph's Church, 359 Sixth Ave. & Washington Place, New York City. All are welcome.

WASHINGTON REPORT

WATERGATE AND RELATED MATTERS

Some, but not all, of the President's Men tried to put him back together again. A few did it because they believed for a long time that he was maligned; there were those, of course, who helped in order to save their skins. The President, himself, occasionally tried to help himself in a vague way. However, all the efforts just didn't work.

And so, Richard resigned as President two years ago this August. He was persuaded not to go on trial before the Senate on a charge of wrong-doing agreed upon by the House Judiciary Committee.

A movie and dozens of books have tried to tell the story like it was. At most, a few of the books made a good effort at setting down what happened. The most publicized book, of course, was written by Bob and Carl, the yearling *Washington Post* reporters who contributed to the downfalll of Richard. And the movie was taken from The Book they had written.

Somewhere, perhaps in a recent issue of this magazine, there's a criticism that the movie—and the book, in a way, too—*tells* more about the two reporters and the technique of their working than it does and can tell about the scandal of Watergate. The two reporters know this, as do many others around this Town.

Of course, the main problem is that the Watergate scandal is simply an illustration of what's wrong with the way things are going here in Washington. Watergate is one matter. It is, legally, behind us. Yes. But the larger problem is yet unsolved, although Democratic and Republican party leaders, including most candidates, are willing to let the matter lie.

In so doing, they are saying that the federal government is still one that in a large degree depends on the well-being of men—and not laws. Not to the degree, of course, found in such countries as the Soviet Union and China and Uganda. But to a degree larger than most of us are willing to concede.

Setting Watergate aside, there are numerous problems that demand more attention than they're receiving.

The matter of devising more effective methods for providing supervision over the numerous intelligence-gathering agencies of the executive branch of the federal government is *not* going well in the spring of this year. The House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is setting out to determine how a weekly newspaper obtained a copy of sections of a final report by the House Select Intelligence Committee. Far less attention is given the final report itself. The main effort should be to have the report itself widely distributed and an effort made to prevent the disorders caused by the CIA and other agencies involved improperly in domestic affairs—yours and mine. In the Senate, a resolution

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to establish a Senate Intelligence Committee is being mauled by other committees that don't want to lose their jurisdictions. Armed Services, Foreign Relations and Judiciary Committees are among the standing committees which prefer no new committee be established to oversee all intelligence-gathering agencies. It is quite possible that there will be no basic change made, as is necessary, in the set-up now of which agencies report to which committees.

The Multinational Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee is trying to explore further the abuses by domestic corporations in their dealings with foreign governments. It is this Subcommittee, under Senator Church, which disclosed Lockheed Aircraft's intensive and extensive activities. This included paying funds to "influential persons" in Italy, the Netherlands, Japan and West Germany. One contract would be worth more than $1 billion to Lockheed.

In this connection, the Senate Banking Committee has disclosed that 30 or more major companies have recently said they have made political payments to help in their business overseas. Senator Proxmire, chairman of the committee, has accused the Treasury Secretary, William Simon, with assisting Lockheed in terms of giving the company a break on the bribe question so as not to interfere with Lockheed's being able to repay its indebtedness under a federal loan guarantee. "Secretary Simon, who is properly business-like when it comes to New York," Proxmire said, "turns indulgent when the beneficiary is Lockheed." Proxmire said he thought it "galling" when the Lockheed loan is extended indefinitely because an amount of money, equaling more than 10 percent of the loan, has been paid in bribes, approximately $24-million.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, however, did beat the "arms industry" when the latter gathered to defeat a revised arms-sales and military-policies bill (S-2662). The bill, explained Senator Humphrey, was designed to give the Congress, as well as the executive branch, a role in decisions about arms sales. The arms men, however, objected to a variety of provisions—disclosure of fees paid to agents who negotiate military contracts and prohibiting arms sales to countries that practice racial or religious discrimination.

And so the matter is not one of ending a Watergate. It is a daily matter of putting an end to a variety of actions by foreign-sales manufacturers, sometimes in cooperation with highly placed individuals and/or agencies in the executive branch.

If a Watergate in book or movie form helps us all to understand how much more needs to be done, then more power to the publishers and producers. The hazard is that we leave the movie house, or put the finished book down, and chortle that everything is fine and we can go back to doing whatever we've been doing, in peace.

SISYPHUS

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KAREN QUINLAN

THE COURT'S VERDICT

As has often happened during the course of the past year, Karen Quinlan hauntingly smiles at us from the front pages. This time the story says that the New Jersey Supreme Court decided her father may seek a physician willing to stop the respirator which has ruthlessly kept her from death for over a year. Now that it is clear that no further legal maneuvers will be attempted, this decision should be the penultimate chapter in one of the major tragedies of modern medical practice.

Even though the case may end mercifully with Ms. Quinlan's death, some issues have been raised by the Court which merit further investigation and evaluation. This case is by no means unique and developments within medicine and medical technology will continue. Continued reflection seems to be imperative.

Based on the published reports of the new decision, the Court saw value in some issues posed by ethical commentators, although these issues are properly articulated within a legal and medical perspective. One note of comfort in the decision is that physicians now distinguish between curing the ill and comforting the dying. Implicit in this is the recognition that while there is an obligation to cure the ill, there way be an obligation only to care for and comfort the dying. The Court said such attitudes are balanced efforts to implement a proper respect for the meaning of life and death. While I personally laud the Court for accepting this position, I also think it is a shame that this viewpoint, a tradition of Roman Catholic medical ethics and a principle well developed by Ramsey in 1970, has taken so long to sink into the consciousness of many and to be legally implemented.

The recognition of the Court that the act of turning off the respirator is not an act of either criminal or unlawful homicide is also a positive sign. There is a clear recognition that the cause of death will be the failure of the biological processes to maintain themselves—not the removal of the respirator. Put in much simpler terms, one can argue that the Court recognized that, in common experience, all of us will die—regardless of the quality or quantity of various holding actions or medical machines. The Court properly distinguished between the unlawful taking of the life of another and a certain

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amount of self-determination in the act of dying and asserted that the recognition of death's inevitability hardly infers the right to murder. Such a distinction clearly removes this discussion from the categories of active or direct euthanasia and places it within the human experience of death as the fate of us all.

A third encouraging note is the Court's recognition that there comes a time when individual rights overcome the State's interests. The clear suggestion is that the closer individuals come to their death, the weaker State's interests over them become. While applauding this conclusion with its clear implication of some kind of right to be left alone, one needs to raise the issue of exactly what the State's interest is. How far into one's life can the State reach? How is the value of life enhanced socially and individually by artificially maintaining the biological processes of unconscious dying patients? One may ask if the interest of the State may not better be articulated in terms of protecting the citizen from uncritical application of technology which may have the capacity to stabilize or maintain persons while neither curing them nor restoring them to reasonable health. We need to recognize that there is a real problem in adapting either too casual or too strict an approach to medical care; yet within this dilemma, the interests of the State with respect to the individual must be clearly enunciated and firmly argued. Hoisting the flag of State's interests may stop a particular action, but in itself does not resolve the issue.

In spite of these generally positive elements in the recent Quinlan decision, there are also two very problematic issues. One is the published report of the gratuitous dismissal of the issue of religious freedom. The Court relied on the old saw that the right to religious beliefs is absolute, but that religious actions are subject to governmental restraint. While it is absolutely clear that the use of extraordinary or heroic treatment is a moral option within Roman Catholicism, it is by no means self-evident that the forcing of extraordinary treatment on individuals is not a violation of their religious freedom. It is one thin gto say that the public interest is at stake; it is quite another matter to prove it. Also, since a Constitutional right is under discussion, all presumptions should favor that established right, unless clearly stated and strongly demonstrated vested state interests are brought forward —and they were not. Much more careful thought needs to go into the famous distinction between religious belief and action than is evidenced here. The distinction is more hypothetical than real. Secondly, the distinction begs the question of the relation of belief and action by implicitly suggesting that religious acts—even if optional—are only tenuously related to religious beliefs and may therefore by impeded without any violation of First Amendment rights. Finally, the decision fails to take into account the basic rejection of the *Reynold's* principle of separation of beliefs and actions in recent cases such as *Macintosh* (1970) and *Yoder* (1972). The issue of religious freedom in such cases is a profoundly serious one to which the courts have not been very sympathetic. The time has come for a thorough re-evaluation of this issue.

The second problematic issue in this decision is that of the Constitutional right of privacy. Quite properly the Court argues that this right is broad enough to cover a decision to decline medical treatment under certain conditions. This ultimate sanctuary of the person appears to be one of the best Constitutional and ethical places to develop a strong argument for this position. The unfortunate part is that the decision did not stop there; it went on to say that the right to privacy is broad enough to cover this decision, just as it is broad enough to cover a woman's decision to terminate her pregnancy under certain conditions. The problem here is not necessarily a substantive one. However, it is profoundly strategic.

One of the problems in the discussion of Ms. Quinlan's situation has been the lumping together of all sorts of unrelated issues, which has served only to further obfuscate an already murky situation. The Court has opened itself unnecessarily to the possibility of a strong attack by extreme right-to-life groups who argue a moral domino theory with respect to the practice of abortion and euthanasia. Many expressed relief at the first Quinlan decision because it was perceived as a way of stopping euthanasia-on-demand. Now the Court—from this particular perspective—has not only apparently waffled on the euthanasia issue, but has done so by using the same reasons which justify abortion. While neither a necessary nor a correct reading of the decision, many may argue that this is the clear implication of it. Unfortunate as this may be, the ensuing unclarity and hostility will be the fault of the insensitive wording of the decision. Some will always be ideologically incapable of separating issues, but there is no good reason why these groups should be handed such opportunities on a silver platter.

Even though it is an obvious improvement over the first decision in its affirmation that removing a person from a respirator is basically not an act of criminal or unlawful homicide, and in its recognition of the distinction between caring and curing, nonetheless this most recent decision does raise some serious issues that need further investigation. The relation between optional religious actions, religious freedom and forced medication merits much more careful treatment than they have received in the literature and in court decisions. Also the proper relations—and the lack thereof—between the right to life, the right to privacy, and abortion, and euthanasia need to be clearly stated with sound ethical and empirical reasoning. In spite of these continuing problems, most will be relieved to know that the needless agony of Ms. Quinlan and her family is over. *Requiescat in pace!*

THOMAS A. SHANNON

(*Thomas A. Shannon is Assistant Professor of Social Ethics at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute.*)

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KENEALLY'S RELUCTANT PROPHETS

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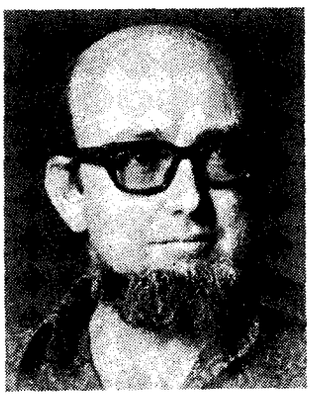

Analysis and an interview with the novelist

Thomas Keneally is an Australian novelist who has won high critical acclaim in his own country, Great Britain and America. He was born in Sydney in 1935, and trained for several years for the Catholic priesthood but did not take Orders. His novels include *Bring Larks and Heroes* (1967) which won the Miles Franklin Award for the best Australian novel of that year; *Three Cheers for the Paraclete* (1968) which the *New York Times Book Review* noted was "rich in unexpected visions and sudden epiphanies. [Keneally] writes like an angel."; *The Survivor* (1969) which was the joint winner of the Captain Cook Literary Award; *A Dutiful Daughter* (1971); *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1972) which was on the short list for the Booker Prize; *Blood Red, Sister Rose* (1974); *Gossip from the Forest* (1975). Mr. Keneally lives in Sydney, but is currently spending two years in Connecticut with his wife and daughters while working on two novels for his American publishers, Harcourt Brace.

* * *

When the word of the Lord first came to Jeremiah he demurred: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." The Lord God insisted: "Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Humbled by such proof, and driven by the persistent voice of the Almighty, Jeremiah obeyed, roaring the wrath of God up and down the streets of Jerusalem—but not without protest, not without a very human smarting at the ridicule and hostility, not without attempts to wrench free of the divine destiny:

O Lord, thou hast deceived me,
and I was deceived;
thou art stronger than I,
and thou hast prevailed:
I have become a laughingstock all the day;
every one mocks me. (R.S.V. Jer. 20:7)

Yet he is trapped, the puppet of the inexorable will of God, and of his own inner drivenness:

If I say, "I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,"
there is in my heart
as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones,
and I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot. (R.S.V. Jer. 20:9)

The protagonists of the novels of Thomas Keneally are Jeremiahs of a sort, reluctant prophets or messiahs. A form of sainthood is thrust willy nilly upon them. At times they court it, romanticize it, flaunt the exceptional nature of their chosenness; at times they fight it, struggling to escape, knowing the price of sainthood to be martyrdom, victimization; at times they mock it, demythologizing their own aureoles, revealing themselves as ordinary men and women with fears, lusts, greeds, impure motives—prophets by random circumstance only.

The contexts of their election vary greatly. There is Halloran of *Bring Larks and Heroes*, educated in the Bishop's school in Wexford, Ireland, destined for the Sulpicians in Paris, but consigned to the "world's worse end" as a felon for having attended a meeting of the Land Tenure Committee. As a Corporal of Marines in the late eighteenth century penal colony of Sydney,

JANETTE T. HOSPITAL *is an Australian writer and poet who lives and works in Canada. This article is based on an extensive interview with Thomas Keneally.*

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where life is raw and brutalized, he is forced to make a choice between his military oath and his humanity, in effect a choice between probable military promotion with eventual return to the world's civilized hemisphere —and a felon's death by hanging.

In *Three Cheers for the Paraclete*, Maitland is a scholarly priest with a hankering for the quietude of uninterrupted research. He has no taste for the role which takes him by surprise—the storm center of theological and political controversy in St. Peter's House of Studies in Sydney, a bastion of orthodoxy and conservatism. He tries earnestly *not* to be a rebel, to submit humbly to discipline, but falls casualty to his burning conscience—and his hasty temper (sainthood never being unalloyed with tangled human psychology in Keneally's novels).

In *The Survivor* there are two candidates for the status of uneasy prophet. The leader of a 1924 Antarctic Expedition looms gigantic in the memory of a surviving member of the team who was forced to leave his leader dead in the wasteland of ice. Now an aging small-town academic, Alec Ramsey is tormented by guilt: can he be certain that Leeming was actually dead when he abandoned him with a few crude burial rites—a broken ski made into a cross and carved with Leeming's initials? And was Leeming God-like or Satanic, a moral giant, an arrogant bastard, or simply a "rather shrunken man"? Ramsey's own role as a survivor is ambiguous—a sort of self-imposed destiny. "I was a polar monk and Leeming was my abbot." He is the "professional survivor" of Rotary Club speaking engagements, by turns self-mocking and righteously outraged that his callow audiences have no awareness of the massively heroic significance of Leeming.

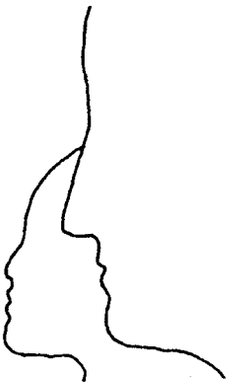
Leeming has, for Ramsey, the quality of a sacrament as potent as the word that compelled Jeremiah. At an academic party he is suddenly asked by a drunken poet:

> "Well, question is, did you and that Dr. Lloyd eat of Leeming?"
>
> "I beg your pardon." If Alec was not straightaway outraged it was because the stressed preposition came to his ear with an almost biblical sound, innocuous to the sixty-two-year-old son of a Presbyterian pastor. *Unless you eat of the flesh . . .* "How did you get back to the coast then?" the poet was insisting. . . . Ramsey dared not move. That indigestible leader and unswallowable death flooded and exposed him at the one time; very like the similar vertigo and smotheration caused by the Antarctic phenomenon called white-out . . .
>
> After a time he remembered that he had not in fact eaten Leeming, but the poet's suggestion seemed to him one that he must urgently blend into what he already knew of Leeming and himself.

Finally his gnawing guilt is both exposed and expiated by the unexpected "resurrection" of the dead leader. Forty years later another expedition finds the body frozen and preserved in the polar ice-cap. Ramsey's shock is considerable.

> His fear of the resurrection, of the mere event, recurred.
>
> He fought it with his reason . . .
>
> He felt frightened too that Leeming's reappearance would bend and incite him powerfully towards publicly saying *the truth.*
>
> And he thought of *the truth* as of an unknown baggage that would be forced on him by this last ploy of Leeming's, this resurgence. He seemed to be afraid, therefore, of matters yet unknown to him, matters for which he would feel culpable yet which would surprise him as much as they would surprise anyone.

It is an apocalypse he tries frantically to prevent. "For it seemed to him then that he had always been consoled by Leeming's incorruptibility in the ice. It was as crude an intuition as this: he sensed that it diminished his guilt. Now he thought instantly that they must not force those pitiful remains to make any deferred payment of decay."



Although in a state of dread, Ramsey cannot refrain from returning to the Antarctic to witness the removal of the body, though he fears "a change in the essence of his life, a change as absolute as death." The body is removed from its crevice by a winch in a macabre parody of ascension:

> As the bundle eked a slow semi-circle above the heads of the people Ramsey saw how he had based his world on guilt for the quite transcendent wrongs done against Leeming. But now the ordinariness of the bundle spurred him to acknowledge the ordinariness of Leeming and the pedestrian nature of his sins against Leeming. Ramsey was so angered at the years he had wasted on shame that a demand rose in him to tear his own flesh.

In *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, a fictional treatment of actual incidents, Jimmie is a half-blooded Aborigine living on a reservation. He is singled out by the Methodist missionary for education, for imbuement with European ideals. The time is 1900-1901, the fermenting years of Australia's federation as a nation.

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Jimmie self-consciously accepts his chosenness. He sets out to disprove the image of the black man as shiftless, drunken, incapable of learning or of holding a steady job. He becomes more educated than the constables and farmers in the small rural towns where he works, he labors hard and diligently, he is Christian rather than a worshipper of the ancient tribal spirit gods, he marries a white girl in a Methodist church. And he is hated and spurned with an intensity greater than the indifferent contempt reserved for his tribal relatives. Quite suddenly, by a random conjunction of an instance of insulting discrimination with the limits of Jimmie's hopes and endurance, he becomes an apostle of black vengeance and violence, a black Jeremiah crying woe to the white oppressors. His rampage is not indiscriminate. With passionate but calculated method he brutally murders men, women and children from the long list of the families who have wronged him.

He knows that he must sustain his hatred and anger at a fervid and religious pitch to justify his butcheries, but is unable to do so. Jimmie Blacksmith, "lost beyond repair somewhere between the Lord God of Hosts and the shrunken cosmogony of his people" is doomed to spend the rest of his life "in tenuous elation and solid desolation between self-knowledge and delirium." He eludes capture for months, is shot and wounded, slips into a convent while the nuns are at vespers, and, ironically, it is the bishop's bed in which he almost bleeds to death before being discovered by the Mother Superior. He is nursed back to sufficient health for hanging.

Blood-Red, Sister Rose is the story of Joan of Arc. Keneally's Jehanne—with the compulsion of her Voices, her dread of the martyrdom she foresees, her vacillation between a craving for the peaceful life of a peasant's wife and the thrill of leading the king's armies —has much in common with Jeremiah. As King Zedekiah both needs and fears Jeremiah, keeping him as a privileged prisoner until he is expendable because no longer useful, so Charles needs and fears Jehanne, who is kept on the leash of political expediency until her purpose has been served. She has the same abrasive and aggressive courage as Jeremiah.

* * *

Question: Mr. Keneally, your Jehanne is very much a fifteenth-century feminist. Was this a conscious political characterization on your part?

Keneally: Yes. I characterized Jehanne as a rough Australian country girl. As a matter of fact, she was modeled after Germaine Greer.

Question: Does Germaine Greer know that?

Keneally: No. I'm not at all sure she'd be flattered. She might well be outraged.

Question: I take it you are an admirer?

Keneally: Yes, but I also find her terrifying. I had to interview her on TV in Sydney in 1972. I was extremely nervous, and well primed with alcoholic courage to face her verbal sharpshooting. But I suddenly had a sense of the almost animal panic in her, of her vulnerability to attack—a feeling for the loneliness of her role—a "somebody has to do this but why me?" aura. I sensed her being pulled in two directions —between determination and anguish.

Question: Did this interview give you the idea to write about Joan of Arc?

Keneally: No. The subject matter had fascinated me for some time. Jehanne changed the very nature of warfare almost single-handedly. But Germaine Greer gave the shape and style to the character.

Question: I feel sure that Ms. Greer (and all feminists, including myself) would share Jehanne's outrage when her success is put down in a very well-worn sexist way *after* all the battles have been won and the king crowned:

De la Tremoille: And such a new way of proceeding on the matter of prisoners! One would think you were trying to destroy the rules of knighthood.

Jehanne: In my tiny knowledge of the business, my lord, they look stupid without any help from me.

He did his high laugh and began climbing the stairs again.

De la Tremoille: Well, a great day for everyone. I didn't think I'd see it . . . And now it's all done I suppose you can wear skirts again.

When she put weight on the ball of her foot her whole leg trembled. She thought that fat man would crucify me this morning if he could.

Question: Most of your protagonists seem caught in the grip of either some divine force or their own consciences to act politically and socially. If Halloran and Jimmie Blacksmith do not bring about any changes, they at least function as the conscience of their societies. Maitland and Jehanne actively intervene in their societies politically, and do bring about social and political change. I assume then that your theology would be in agreement with that of the Theology of Liberation writers, such as Rubem Alves and Rosemary Ruether?

Keneally: I don't really know. I don't read theology as such any more.

Question: But you yourself still consider what Andrew Greeley calls "the God question" worth asking?

Keneally: Oh certainly. But not in an orthodox or institutional way. And I no longer think of God as a personal being.

Question: How long were you in seminary?

Keneally: Six and a half years, from 1953 to 1959. Training in Sydney as a diocesan priest.

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Question: When would you have been ordained?

Keneally: Two weeks after I pulled out.

Question: Why did you pull out?

Keneally: It was not a crisis of conscience or faith. It was a crisis of emotional suppression. I still feel much anger at the responsibility of the church as an institution for the stifling of the intellect, of talent, of love, of the possibility of love, of the possibility of forming any intimate relationship with any other human being.

* * *

In *Bring Larks and Heroes,* Halloran suffers from this learned stifling of love as he recalls his schooling in the Bishop's house at Wexford. He remembers the Dean's Latin anatomizing of love, from the divine, down through the affection between the spouses for the purpose of begetting children, descending finally to "love only in a debased sense of the word, love by analogy only, love execrable in a tipsy ditch with a dirty, racy vagrant woman." Halloran explained to his secret wife, Ann, that his purpose, "whenever he lay with her, was to keep matters as close to God and as far away from the vagrant woman as he could." But when Ann proves to be "as racy as any vagrant woman" Halloran is "delighted but baffled."

> His mind would intervene as an arbiter and try to reorganize his motives according to the rules as laid down by Dean Hannon. And his ardor would die, and he would see doubt all over Ann's face.

In *Three Cheers for the Paraclete,* Maitland is celebrating Mass on a windy headland for a group of graduate students. He preaches a short sermon which subsequently causes him much trouble with his superiors, although it endears him to the students. Even as he preaches he is tormented with self-doubt, with fears of his own hypocrisy, afraid that he sounds "like a fashionable priest, the glib kind."

> "There are historical causes why European Christianity gave Eros poison to drink, took a confused view of him, placed him under a subtle ban."
>
> He said what the causes were, he touched lightly on centuries and found them pliant to his touch. It was a false pliancy . . . "What have you been told from childhood, again and again? You've been told that Eros is a source of danger. So he is. Yet it must have seemed that if he did not have a hand in the propagation of little Catholics, he wouldn't be given standing room. For Eros is a filthy little pagan with dirty habits. One comes to see that he has been maligned. His presence generates in a person those decent human enthusiasms without which life and even religion are lost. You complain of the pallid cast of soul of this or that priest? But he lacks the self-surrender imposed by Eros to help men to enthusiasm. The priest's way is harder because he does not have this ready means of keeping his personality malleable. As you pity all sapless humans, you must pity and have understanding for the sapless priest. For some of us have been betrayed into a frame of mind that is justly expressed in the saying: 'Because they love no one, they imagine that they love God'."

* * *

Question: Maitland is conscious of this stifling of human love, of the intellect, of his scholarly articles and books. Did you experience any specific suppression of your writing?

Keneally: Yes. My articles, short stories, poetry were all censored.

Question: You are, then, Maitland?

Keneally: Yes and no. I didn't have the guts or the maturity of Maitland. Like Maitland (and Halloran and Jehanne) I feel a tremendous pull toward the conservative prosaic life, a yen for the peaceful and ordinary.

* * *

All Keneally's protagonists try to escape their destinies, to quiet their consciences, to cling to the ordinary life. Halloran dreads a felon's death; he has seen hideous hangings; yet his humanity and conscience compel him to steal food to aid the convict Hearn (like Leeming, an enigmatic Prophet-Satanic figure). Hearn is a Wicklow Protestant, and is convinced his escape plan is "God's scheme."

> "Yes," Halloran said, "I can imagine the Almighty dodging up and down this part of the world, grinding his axe with a Wicklow Protestant . . ." In fact, he was terrified that there might be something on the divine agenda to cut straight across the cramped sphere of tenderness where he and Ann lived . . . He detested prophets, prophets were a great danger. This prophet had had two raw nights to succumb to, but here he was, voluble with prophecy, muttering omens in the bushes. They don't feed you enough to take these shocks, Halloran told himself.

Maitland detests his own prison of doubt, hankers after the old certainties:

> The cold fust of old books assailed him in the dark; devotional books, Dublin 1913, a good year for unalloyed faith. Why couldn't he have been alive and priested then? Saving up indulgences, averting tumors of the throat with a St. Blaise candle, uttering arcane litanies . . . dying in 1924

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of dropsy, rosaries and the certainty of Paradise.

Jehanne's divine destiny seems part biological chance; she is an embarrassment to her family because she has never menstruated. To herself, this seems to single her out for a more absolute virginity. Perhaps she is the virgin of Merlin's prophecy, the virgin from Lorraine who will deliver the king. She longs to be normal, to marry, to have children; she grieves for the abnormality of her womb. But she also yearns to be special; she does not want to join in the country adolescent body games and "vanish into some pattern of family and kinship." Then there are her Voices—but there is also her *decision.* "I'm *that* virgin. The one in Merlin." A local gentlewoman responds: "For God's sake, Jehannette, how could you be *that* damned virgin?" Jehanne replies: "Someone has to be. If someone wasn't chosen, someone would have to choose herself." What Jehanne needs, says the lady, is a husband. To which Jehanne retorts with irritation: "Do you think I want to be that virgin? Do you think there are rewards for it?"

Like Jeremiah ("Cursed be the day that I was born") Jehanne is terrified of her own victimhood. Both beg their God and their king for a release from the destiny and from martyrdom. Jehanne wrestles with her Voices:

Messire: Little he-rose, little she-soldier, when the king is anointed . . .

Jehanne: What? What, Messire?

Messire: The steel goes in, the heat blasts, the rose bleeds.

Jehanne: Holy Jesus!

Messire: You'll never be alone.

Jehanne: But when the steel goes in . . .

Messire: There's no consolation.

She woke yelling *I deserve better!*

* * *

Question: In spite of the yen for the ordinary of your protagonists and yourself, you, like them, *did* become politically involved, didn't you?

Keneally: Yes, I was one of the sponsors of the Australian Vietnam Moratorium in 1970. I marched in demonstrations. But my political involvement did not begin until after I left the seminary. When I left I was mentally and emotionally strung out. I worked for six months as a builder's laborer. No one showed any interest in my welfare. No one cared what had become of me. I felt an enormous sense of betrayal, of the inhumanity of the church as an institution toward individual people. I began for the first time to think politically, to see the church as one more corrupt institution among many in a corrupt society.

In 1966, I did a TV documentary in Sydney on the corruption of the corporations and institutions of Australian society, including the institutional church which functioned like any other commercial corporation. It appalled the church, of course, and brought down wrath upon my head.

Question: Just like Maitland?

* * *

Maitland's working-class cousin, Joe, has been cheated out of his small savings by the misleading advertising and devious legal contracts of a housing development corporation. Maitland protests to the corporation on Joe's behalf.

[He was shown] into the office of the Allied Projects Development Company's chief accountant. He was greeted in a manner he had come to hate by a man of about forty. The greeting said, "We're all professional men together and know the price of fish. Besides which, some of my best friends are Catholics and Monsignor X has money invested in us. Your *company,* if I can call it that, and ours are two of the pillars that keep the sky up."

The company refuses to refund Joe's money. Maitland preaches a sermon in a fashionable church on the

readiness of the church to condone social evils. It is reported on the front page of a city newspaper under the headline "A Power in the Pulpit." His superiors are furious. There are so many safe topics one could preach on. "It's the patently artificial things a priest can safely attack. The mass media, materialism, advertising, the threat of Communism, paganism in the arts. Add all that to faith and morals and you've enough for a lifetime of sermons."

The newspaper subsequently publishes seven letters from people who have suffered under the same company, and also the announcement by the managing director of Allied Projects that the archdiocese owns shares in both itself and its mother-sister-company, Investment General. Maitland receives a phone call from the Archbishop:

"James, I detest this sort of embarrassment, you know, the type that gives hint that the Church is economically entrenched . . . Of course, there are still people who feel that way, who imagine that an archdiocese can be run without revenue, where an oil company can't."

. . . "Your Grace," he said trembling, "is the

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archdiocese going to back me up by selling its holdings in both those companies?"

There was silence at His Grace's end . . .

"My heaven, *that's* called turning the flank," His Grace decided, not without some hint of approval. "However, Mr. Boyle [a papal knight, and auditor of the company] . . . assures me that the companies are respectable and in no way depart from the norms of the business world."

Nevertheless, a few days later His Grace telephones again with the news that having sought legal advice, the archdiocese will be getting rid of its stock.

* * *

A century and a half earlier, in the same city, Halloran had less success with, and more bitterness for, the institutional church. Four Irish Catholic convicts have been condemned to hanging for stealing from government stores to aid another convict in escaping. The Protestant chaplain comes to the condemned hut where Halloran and his three fellow convicts are chained like animals awaiting execution.

The Reverend Mr. Calverley begins to preach about the wrath of God to sinners. The men "pelt him with the best blasphemies they had." The noise brings a Constable with a chain in his hand. He swings it round the hut, beating "at the four man-soft corners. The chain clattered and plopped across wood and flesh, hissed along Halloran's scalp one way, then another." The chaplain is appalled, and orders the Constable to stop, "but he thought that stripes these four deserved, and stripes they would get in their pit in hell."

"There is no other name but the name of Jesus given in heaven or on earth by which it behooveth a man to be saved," proclaimed the chaplain quietly.

"And *he* works for Government House," John McHugh called, feeling out his chain wounds and crying over them.

* * *

Question: Although all your protagonists find themselves in opposition to an institutionalized God, they are all supported by an inner (sometimes mystical) religion. And they act on the authority of this religious conscience. So although you do not read the theologians of liberation, I assume you would approve of their political activity.

Keneally: With reservations. I have a great distrust of the church's history of co-optation, of its ability to exploit legitimate impulses of rebellion for its own ends.

Question: Yet surely people like Camillo Torres, Paulo Freire, Helder Camara are like the heroes/heroines of your novels? They have stayed within the institution of the church, risked their lives in political involvement.

Keneally: Yes. I must make it clear that my distrust of the church's left-wing political endeavors is not a rational one. It is still a reaction of personal and instinctual anger.

Question: Yet Maitland submitted completely to his superiors in the end—to the censorship of his sermons, the ban on publishing and a disciplinary transfer to a rural parish. If you were writing *Three Cheers for the Paraclete* now, eight years later, would you still have Maitland remain a priest?

Keneally: No. I'd have him get out into politics. Or writing.

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ROY SCHEELE

AT THE ARBORETUM

Euonymus,
the Indians'
burning bush
or arrowwood
(wahoo!)

but caught here
on the second day
of spring
napping, as it were—
only a few

poor papery leaves
to lead the eye
back to the rush
that was:
O autumn bush

looming all light
in the doorway,
quiver of gold
that all one way
quick-turning

turned in the air
to fire,
O plummet
stricken dumb
when you struck home,

come green
again, flesh out
and speak the light,
take up the ash
of that burning!

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JOHN COGLEY
1916-1976

A sampler from two decades of writing in Commonweal

The Best Defense

Jacques Maritain once asked his listeners at a philosophers' meeting to consider what a different world we might be living in if a Thomist had written *Das Kapital.* That is an interesting, if somewhat tragic consideration for today. There may be similar considerations tomorrow, with equally tragic overtones, unless at least some of the seemingly limitless energy going into the ancient and wearying anti-Communist crusade, which has usually been notoriously long on rhetoric and short on reason, isn't diverted into more positive channels.

Fighting Communism has become in America a popular and exhausting pastime for all kinds of people (some Catholic veterans have been heard to complain like Jimmy Durante that now everybody is trying to get into the act); as pastimes go, it may be less harmful than others. But it is an expensive occupation, too. An alarmingly high percentage of the national income is going into the fight. That perhaps can be justified by the demands of national security. But the outlay of cold cash is not the greatest expense. Money, after all, is only money.

What American Catholics cannot afford is the sheer energy being expended in the realm of thought and spirit for an *anti,* largely rhetorical enterprise. The youthful enthusiasm given to a negation might be given to genuinely Christian social reconstruction. The emphasis on fear and suspicion found everywhere might well be transformed into hope and vision—and hard work.

—First Editorial, Oct. 21, 1949

The Long Road

The London *Economist* has referred to the first half of 1950 as our "months of degradation." It has been a time of confusion and general suspicion, such as must exist in the always-threatened police state, and of frustration. The enemy may be anyone, anywhere, and the temptation is to swing out wildly and blindly, forgetting the safeguards provided by the maddeningly slow, laborious processes of law. The temptation has been to make the accused prove their innocence, to salvage their reputations, before the courts have pronounced them guilty, and to grow weary with judicial procedure. The American courts in every case have been scrupulously just in dealing with those accused of betrayal or treason. But the popular tendency is to anticipate the courts, to pre-judge the accused, in the public press and the public forum, on the basis of what may turn out to be coincidence, circumstantial evidence, non-conformism or mere assertion.

The Hiss conviction and the Fuchs case shocked Americans profoundly. We, who never feared before, learned for the first time what a fifth column could mean in terms of betrayal and survival. The natural first reaction was near panic and consequently the temptation to lose faith in ourselves and our own ways.

For months now the spotlight has been held by men like Whittaker Chambers and Louis Budenz who speak another language than the one we are used to: men who because of their backgrounds and personal histories accept treason and conspiracy as almost normal social phenomena. The ascent of these deadly serious informers who have emerged from the con-

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spiratorial darkness, and of Senator Joe McCarthy in the role of reckless, irresponsible bogey-man have set the mood of the day. Where there is fear and suspicion the tendency is to react emotionally and blindly, and in time, if the mood persists, the voice of reason is stilled forever . . . —*Editorial, June 2, 1950*

The New Absolute

Like the doctrine of hell, infinitely horrible, the fact of nuclear warfare, for most of us, is hard to grasp. And there is the same human tendency to reject it as no more than a fearsome hypothesis. Still, if one studies Hiroshima and Nagasaki and then multiplies that horror by a hundred, by a thousand, perhaps soon by a million, the mind begins to grasp dimly what the instincts and emotions reject.

"This is not the time for panic," the newspapers are forever telling us. But the advice seems unnecessary. No one we know seems very panicky. The only ones who speak in extremes are those nuclear scientists, sober men, who keep trying in vain to impress upon the rest of us the full terror that has come from their laboratories. But the newspapers are right, of course; panic would be disastrous. That does not mean, though, that we can go on thinking like pre-atomic age innocents. When we say "Give me liberty or give me death" now, we should know whereof we speak. We can no longer use that noble sentiment as a mere rhetorical flourish—total death is too imminent a possibility. And in total death there is no liberty.

Our work, then, is to preserve liberty while we stave off total death. That means often that we have to be satisfied with less-than-totalities along the way—partial military victories, for instance; "police actions" instead of total wars; the maddening, frustrating disappointments of "diplomatic methods" rather than the full clean sweep of armies surrendering unconditionally; the ambiguities of political warfare rather than the absolute superiority that goes with unquestioned military power. In the H-bomb age there are no more total victories: we have to live in a world where the only victory is partial defeat, and that surely is the hardest pill to swallow.

Those who have grasped the meaning of nuclear warfare may perforce sound timid and wavering in the presence of the men who demand final absolute solutions—the "total victory," "unconditional surrender," etc. But it is to the former that we look for real salvation. The A-bomb—and now the H-bomb—introduced a new absolute, and they never lose sight of that fact. While their critics bitterly find fault with them as "appeasers," "compromisers," etc., they are the ones who have held the free world together, betraying neither the cause of liberty nor yet courting total death. It is part of the Age of Irony that their critics—who like to set themselves up as the besieged "moralists" surrounded by shabby "relativists"—would have served neither end. Their only contribution so far has been to make life difficult for those who walk with fear and trembling, dreading, as well they might, the one false step that would set off the awful horror, while they seek out the road to peace.

—*Editorial, Aug. 21, 1953*

All This and Heaven Too?

There has been a tendency in the last few years—bolstered, I am sorry to say, by the President himself—to identify greatness and godliness. America is great, Mr. Eisenhower said on one occasion, because America is good; when America ceases to be good it will no longer be great.

I cannot say just what Mr. Eisenhower had in mind. Perhaps he was simply talking about moral grandeur. But I am afraid that his maxim was generally interpreted to mean that American greatness, measured in material wealth and political stature, was somehow a reward for American godliness.

An atheistic nation may be great. A have-not nation may be godly. It may even be that when a great nation begins to think of itself as godly because it is great, it has gone a long way toward losing its claim on godliness. *God Is My Co-Pilot* was the title of a war hero's memoirs. At the time the book came out, the sheer arrogance of that title could be charitably attributed to occupational disease. But the idea of the Almighty's being assigned to a flight *we* chart and to assisting in a mission *we* design seems recently to have become something of a national delusion in this country . . .

—*Column, April 22, 1955*

A Catholic for President?

I suspect that the argument about a Catholic President is really not very rational. I suspect, rather, that it has something to do with the symbolism of the office. An American President is not merely a Chief Executive; he is the closest thing we have to a living symbol of the nation. Before the world, he represents the rest of us in a very special way. Who he is and what he is, therefore, has much greater significance than the identity of a Senator or even of a Justice of the Supreme Court.

Why, at this point, is a Negro President out of the question? There are Negroes fully qualified for the office. Why would a Jewish candidate receive scant con-

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sideration? Why are women virtually eliminated? I suspect that however valid their qualifications, members of these groups could not, at this time, fulfill the symbolic function which the people, by and large, have in mind.

Can a Catholic? This is the big question mark of course. Certainly until recent years many Americans would have felt uneasy at the thought that a member of the Catholic Church was representing them before the world. Al Smith ruefully acknowledged this when he said that the time had not yet come when a man could say his beads in the White House. Thirty years have passed. Has the time yet come?. . . .

America has changed a great deal in the last thirty years. Catholics have changed; Protestants have changed. I do not think that if Mr. Kennedy is nominated he will receive the bigoted battering that Mr. Smith had to take. Nor will he get the rapturous support of Catholics, pitifully pleased that one of their "own kind" has made it. The barrage of criticism he received in the Catholic Press a few weeks ago, even if it does not convince the die-hards that there is no Catholic plot to put a papist in the White House, does indicate rather conclusively that Catholic sectarianism is breaking down.

As I see it, the real question is whether America has become sufficiently pluralistic for a member of a minority group, albeit a large one, to perform the symbolic functions of the Presidency. Not unnaturally, as a member of the minority I hope so. But more than that, I hope that the people will change their minds about what kind of image they want their "symbol" to project.

Up to now, it seems to me, the image they sought was that of a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation, tolerant of minorities but dominantly WASP. To sustain that image, a series of rationalizations were employed—one for Catholics, another for Jews, another for Negroes, Hispanics, Orientals. These rationalizations persist. Ask your neighbor why he would not want to see a Catholic (Jew, Mexican-American or Oriental) President of the United States and you will hear one of these rationalizations. But I hope for a better day. I hope for the day when the White House will be open to Americans of every creed and color because the image America wants to symbolize in its President is that of a "nation of nations, a people of peoples." *—Column, April 10, 1959*

Honesty vs. Loyalty Oaths

Granting all the difficulties and dangers, I believe that emphasis on more honesty in the Catholic community is a good thing, a very good thing. And I am not talking about diocesan newspaper reporting, the airing of clerical scandals, or anything of that nature. What I am talking about is the growing willingness among Catholics to face up to, acknowledge frankly, and try to deal with the problems that confront the man of faith, specifically the Catholic faith, in the contemporary world.

I would not say that religious people are less candid than others or more given to gentle hypocrisies, though that is a common enough charge. I doubt it, though, if only because some of the most self-deceiving people I know are the first ones to make the charge. But whether religious people are or are not less open than their neighbors, it would seem that they should be. At the same time it is sometimes harder for them to be, especially when they know themselves to bear a responsibility for the faith of others. This difficulty is understandable, but it does bear heavily on the question of honesty.

Now I am not talking here about outright lies or blunt denials of the truth. There is a full share of mendacity in religious circles of course, but it is generally recognized as a deviation from the accepted norm. What is at stake in the "search for honesty," though, is a larger, more total commitment to truth than the mere avoidance of lies. It is a desire to be a whole person, in public as well as in private; it is a desire to face up squarely to *all* that one believes to be true and to acknowledge candidly that the acceptance of so many truths and different kinds of truths as are open to modern man can be, and frequently is, the source of tensions. In the strictly Catholic context, it adds up to a distaste for the facile formula or the tricky syllogism which in explaining so much with so little really provides no satisfaction for the man facing these tensions.

The desire for "honesty" in this sense is being felt throughout the Church, though it has not been sufficiently articulated yet. I catch strong hints of its presence and sometimes outright statements of the need for it when articulate laymen get together. It is not unknown among priests and religious—and, for all I know, even among bishops. As yet, the movement toward it is still a kind of undercurrent of Catholic life. But it is there—growing ever stronger and more widespread. To deny it would be foolish. To try to douse it out of existence by denunciations, anathemas, and restrictions has already proved to be futile. Attempts at suppression only backfire and increase the tensions. . . .

—Column, May 22, 1964

God and Caesar

. . . I take it that any relationship between Church and State, from the Church's point of view, exists so that the Church can be about its holy business. Where on earth has the Church ever been more free to do its

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work than in this country? Whatever the failings of Catholics, and they are many, no one can say that the principle of separation is to blame for them.

A *Commonweal* writer receives a certain number of letters complaining that the magazine makes too much about keeping Church and State separate. By insisting on the principle so doggedly, some have implied, the magazine shows less concern for the work of the Church than it should. But I don't think I have ever seen anyone give any credit to our system of Church-State relationship for the health of American Catholicism. Such credit is long overdue.

It is time for American Catholics to tell the world how well our system works. If, as a distinguished Vatican prelate has said, the Church in America should be an example to Catholics everywhere, let it not be forgotten what a great part of the success story was written in 1791 when the Founding Fathers wrote the first ten Amendments to the Constitution.

—Column, September 6, 1957

Humanae Vitae

The Catholic Church is going through something—whether a passing crisis, a revolt, a profound transformation, or a last agony remains to be seen. . . .

Something, it is clear, has to give—and soon. I see two possible general directions in which the Church can move.

It can continue to hold on to its traditional teaching on authority and act vigorously on it—as Cardinals O'Boyle and McIntyre, for example, are doing. Taking this course, the hierarchy will have to discipline rebellious priests and theologians; make it clear to the layman that when his conscience tells him that the Pope is wrong, it is his conscience not the Pope's that needs straightening out; and expect to lose many followers and accept some version of the *diaspora* situation that some prominent theologians were talking about a few years ago.

The second choice is for the Church to admit that its claims for the magisterium were in the past wildly, and even perniciously, exaggerated. The result of that exaggeration was an admirable discipline, but—the present dissenters imply even if they hold off from spelling it out—the discipline was purchased by increasing human misery in the world, creating false consciences among the faithful, and misreading the will of God for mankind.

To ask the Church to take this second course is admittedly asking a lot. But why doubletalk about it, especially at a time when ecclesiastical credibility is already in such bad estate? Why not say that the Anglican and Protestant Churches were more correct in their ecclesiology, their moral teachings, and their faithfulness to the spirit of the Gospel than the Church of Rome, which for so long made the kind of claim its own best theologians are now rejecting?

If, for example, the Anglicans were right about contraception all along and the Romans were wrong, who are the surer moral teachers? Of course, the Anglicans never pretended to be right in the authoritarian way Pius XI and Pius XII did. That, it strikes me, is the heart of the present controversy. The most-sure-of-themselves, according to the dissenting theologians, invested the prestige and power of all ecclesiastical authority in their own error—and, for that matter, they are still doing so.

That is why the present controversy should not be focused so much on birth control as on the Church as Mater et Magistra. If we accept the position of the dissenters, Catholicism has failed conspicuously on both counts, as mother and as teacher. If we accept the position of the disciplining and anathematizing bishops, its record is not fundamentally flawed: however stern its guidance, it is still behaving like a mother; however incredible its teaching to modern men, it is still acting as a teacher—the rest of Christendom is wrong on contraception, not the Church of Rome.

Since this whole controversy began, I have read dozens of elaborations on how, and why, the modern theologians and laymen are right about this issue and the Pope and the bishops who support him are wrong. Some arguments are subtle, some inventive, all are presumably sincere. It is clear, however, that none of them is based on the same idea of the papacy that the Pope himself has of his office. They all add up to the same message: the claims of the magisterium have been dangerously escalated over the centuries, they still are, and it is time to bring them down to size. What we were long led to believe was the product of divine guidance has turned out to be nothing more mystical than the domination of an ecclesiastical power elite which has lost touch with reality.

The questions now, then, may be such as these: If the Pope isn't all we were taught to believe he is, precisely what is he? A *primus inter pares* bishop? One more bad theologian? A sincere but self-deluded relic of another age?

There is no doubt that the papacy, the magisterium, and the authority of the hierarchy are all being ruthlessly demythologized. At the same time, the millions who have lived under the old myths clearly don't want to give up the community they share. They won't accept the old myths but are ready to remain with a demythologized version of Catholicism. Is that possible? The Pope and his bishops say no; the theologians say yes. Most of us don't know and won't until the bishops and the rebellious theologians reach some kind of agreement.

—Symposium, October 11, 1968

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DEATH OF A HERO

PETER STEINFELS

John Cogley and I were barely acquainted. Incredible as it may seem to those who imagine a tight circle of liberal Catholics, we met twice, at most three times. Those encounters were perfectly uneventful. He acted as I had been told he would—shyly, glancing down and stepping back as though to make plenty of room for whatever conversational leads I might wish to offer. I cannot write of him as a close friend would. Indeed, because this is a friend's prerogative, I hesitate to write about him at all.

But if John Cogley was not my friend, he was something else for me —a hero. I know the word sounds strange, rhetorical, at odds with the modest person to whom it is applied. It is nonetheless precise. As an adolescent I admired many people; but Cogley, known to me only through his columns in *Commonweal,* I wanted to be like. Sometime during high school I wrote a letter listing my lifetime ambitions. To write a column like Cogley's in *Commonweal* was one of them. I think that another was to be President of the United States.

That I do write a column in this journal must be at least partly his fault. But it is not a column like his, as I sadly realized when I turned back to old volumes of the magazine. What was it, I was asking, that so attracted me in those short pieces, that conveyed so much more than a position on a passing controversy, that exhibited a cast of mind I hoped to assimilate? The columns I vaguely recall had to do with the defining issues of liberal Catholicism in those years: intellectuals and the Church, the dangers of obsessive anti-Communism, the morality of war and nuclear deterrence, the relations between church and state—above all, church and state, which was actually the point of departure for a wider analysis of the American experience of pluralism and its lesson for Catholicism. Paging back reminded me of how many other things caught Cogley's attention—the quiz show scandals, the conditions of the press, the texture of particular places from Spanish Harlem and Brooklyn Heights to Rome.

Whether the topics were small or large, the columns were inevitably exercises in general ideas, general ideas brought forward, examined, locked together or unlocked, all in a fashion so easy and so scrupulous that it could only be the achievement of an intelligence to which this was second-nature. No posturing or glitter but simple sentences. The personal pronouns—I, we, you—are used familiarly but without false intimacy. When the logic of an argument is compelling but inconvenient, it is admitted nonetheless; yes, the Catholic bishops do have a case in their opposition to American family planning programs overseas; yes, there are legitimate questions about religion that a Catholic candidate for President, more than another candidate, might be asked. When allies adopted tactics that were questionable, Cogley said so. He wanted to serve the *whole* truth, and he was always aware how difficult a task this is, how many temptations there are to cut corners; he once even regretted that columns could not have footnotes in which to note all one's inevitable qualifications and exceptions. His writings, I should recall, were not at all heavy or abstract but particular, personal, relaxed; still, clarity and consistency were terribly important. The point, it always seemed, was to pare away the diversions; the point was to get to the real point.

There is another aspect of those columns which doubtless did not strike me when I first read them but which leaps out at me now. That is the naturalness, the unselfconsciousness with which he always placed his subjects in the context of Christianity or Catholicism. He never wrote as though he possessed those realities, never as though he spoke for them in some authoritative way. The object, in fact, was often the opposite: to discourage a pretense to monolithic Catholicism, to recognize the special and complex reality of secular and political events against the tendency toward instant moralizing. Nevertheless there was a confidence and a certainty and a comfortableness in his generalizations about the faith and the church which I can only envy. Cogley represented an effort to build a bridge to all that the "integralist" mentality had refused to recognize in the modern world; but there was no doubt from which end of the bridge he was operating. There may be valid reasons why many of us now feel we dwell almost entirely on that bridge without ever comfortably touching ground at either end; but the loss of the direct and explicit attitude I find in Cogley's columns is exactly that—a loss.

When John Cogley announced, as quietly as he properly could, that he was transferring membership to the Episcopal Church, I was surprised. I was also deeply moved, because it seemed so clear that his reasons, no doubt more complex than any but his closest associates could know, had so much to do with that respect for principles, that scrupulosity of thought which had drawn me to his columns. It was a characteristic which seemed almost shocking, so absent had it become on the religious horizon. The *New York Times* obituary quoted Cogley as saying of his reasons for this change that "they were of such an old-fashioned doctrinal nature that it is hard to get them taken seriously in these days of ecumenical theology." In the very

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PAST MASTER

THE SCREEN

As in previous films, so in *Family Plot*, Alfred Hitchcock makes a signature appearance during one of the early scenes. A silhouette standing behind the frosted glass in an office door has, we suddenly realize, that unmistakable Hitchcock profile. Unfortunately, the appearance is an apt one too, for it is as a mere shadow of his former self that we see Hitchcock in this movie. Since Hitchcock's movies have always made a morbid joke of death in order to fend off his own fear of it, he may have intended such a joke here in his appearance as a shadow, a disembodied shade. His health is not good, and he may have figured that this film, which is his fifty-third, will be his last. The joke would be so much richer, though, if the film itself had more substance. But it doesn't. Compared to Hitchcock's best work, *Family Plot* is indeed a silhouette. The outline is recognizable, but there isn't any of that detail which can make a Hitchcock film great.

Certainly the concerns that shape *Family Plot* are familiar ones in a Hitchcock movie. Since at least as long ago as *Murder* (1930), Hitchcock's films have tended toward plots that contain *Doppelgängers*—pairs of characters whose lives and actions mirror each other in some curious way. As a rule the pairing is between a criminal and his victim, the former reflecting the latter through a kind of perversion much as the devil does God. In *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), for instance, a sweet, small-town girl (Teresa Wright) almost becomes the victim of her own namesake, a favorite uncle (Joseph Cotten) who is a cosmopolitan bluebeard. In the new film there are two couples who mirror each other. The first is Blanche (Barbara Harris) and George (Bruce Dern). She is a spiritualist and medium who bilks clients with fake revelations from the dead, and he is a part-time cabby who does her research for her. The other couple is Fran (Karen Black) and Arthur (William Devane). He is an expensive jeweler with a sideline in kidnapping, and she is his mistress-accomplice.

The *Doppelgänger* premise here is classic Hitchcock. Whereas Arthur and Fran steal victims away from their loved ones, Blanche and George restore loved ones to *their* victims. Hitchcock establishes the reciprocity the first time we meet the heroines. On our first encounter with Blanche, she is altering her voice like a ventriloquist in order to delude a client into believing she hears a voice from the dead. On our first encounter with Fran, she is collecting a ransom from some men to whom she says nothing in order to prevent their being able to identify her. While Blanche commits her crime by speaking in a variety of voices, Fran commits hers by not speaking at all.

The two couples are *Doppelgängers*, however, by virtue of pursuing not only nefarious careers, but each other as well. What plots involving *Doppelgängers* obviously afford an opportunity for is coincidence, and that is what Hitchcock has always exploited in them. He has been especially fascinated with the way in which the guiltiness of two characters might coincide. In *Psycho* (1960), for example, it is just a coincidence that the motel owner (Anthony Perkins) kills a guest (Janet Leigh) who has herself committed a crime, and the investigation of her crime leads to the discovery of his. In *Family Plot*, a seance Blanche conducts with an old woman puts George on the track of the woman's long-lost heir, who is of course Arthur. But Arthur continually tries to elude George's and Blanche's approaches because he thinks they are on to his kidnapping racket.

Family Plot embodies the relationship between the two couples in a series of chance meetings where the attention of the camera itself switches from one couple to the other. As George drives Blanche back from the seance in the opening scene, they are so engrossed in discussing how to find the missing heir that George's cab nearly hits a pedestrian, who turns out to be Fran on her way to collect a ransom. Likewise, as Arthur and Fran later kidnap a bishop right out from under the noses of his congregation, they notice George in the back of the church, where he's waiting only because Blanche's client happened to mention the bishop's name once. Finally, when Blanche tracks down Arthur at home he ignores her knock because he's just getting ready to collect the ransom for the bishop, but as he opens his garage door Blanche happens to be standing outside blocking his car as Fran blocked George's cab at the crosswalk earlier. Every time these people chance upon each other like this, somebody disappears—first Fran getting away clean from collecting her ransom, then the bishop being kidnapped, and now Blanche being kidnapped too just when she thinks she's doing Arthur a good turn.

All this crossing over and double-crossing makes for a pleasant spoof, but a strictly conventional one. The sort of virtuosity of the direction that has made many other Hitchcock films unique just doesn't occur this time. In *Psycho* a whole series of shots of circular forms—blinding headlights, a peephole in a wall, water swirling down a toilet, a spraying shower nozzle, a tub drain, etc. —culminates in the murder scene in a tight close-up of the victim's dead, visionless eye. These manipulated images are what give *Psycho* its power both to terrify and delight, but *Family Plot* doesn't accumulate imagery like this with which to affect us. In *Shadow of a Doubt* Hitchcock's long shots done from a boom isolate the heroine at just those moments when some increased certainty of her uncle's crimes has further isolated her

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from her family. In *Family Plot*, no equivalent resource of technique makes the characters matter to us in a comparable way.

The potential for such effects is there, but it remains only a potential. *Family Plot* stays nothing more than a plot—a plot of the sort sympathetic to Hitchcock's art, but one into which Hitchcock has not really insinuated himself. At one point, during a chase scene, we think the film has truly come alive at last. After Blanche and George have had a harrowing crash in a car with loosened brakes, the confederate of Arthur's who sabotaged the car tries to run them down as they make their way on foot from the wreckage. A few minutes into the sequence, though, we realize that our enjoyment is as much the work of *dêjà vu* as anything. What has turned us on is a similarity to Cary Grant's pursuit by an airplane in *North by Northwest*, which was also scripted by *Family Plot*'s screenwriter, Ernest Lehman. It's a similarity that is only plot deep, too. Along with everything else in *Family Plot*, its best moments come off only as the ghost of Hitchcock past.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

PRESS

THE NIXON FINALE

THOMAS POWERS

There comes a moment when a reporter can't stand it any longer. He wants to throw down his notebook, bare his teeth, grab somebody by the shirt collar and shake him till his eyes roll. He wants to shout and turn red and shock his victim into an abject state of trembling fear in which everything he knows will come pouring out without further coy or timid prevarication. No doubt homicide detectives, counter-intelligence agents and other professional interrogators occasionally feel this way, too, the difference being that they are normally so insulated from inquiry themselves they can go right ahead and do it. Reporters must close their eyes, breathe deeply, bring their breaking voices under control and try putting the question another way.

I kept thinking about this throughout *All the President's Men*, in which Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman, playing Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, ask frightened secretaries artful questions and receive terrified answers. The agony of that movie for me—for two hours I felt like I was trying to thread a needle in a twilit room—was that furious frustration which comes with receiving one empty or evasive answer after another. It's one thing to be put off by someone who is a genuine adversary. You don't expect people to impeach themselves, and it doesn't bother you when they don't. The painful thing, for a reporter, is to be refused an answer for no good reason at all, from sheer cussedness or timidity.

A typical scene in the movie takes place with a secretary for the Committee to Re-Elect the President. Hoffman invites himself into her house for a cup of coffee. She sits across a small living room, as erect and nervously alert as a mouse in a box with a snake. She does not approve of what has been going on down at CREEP. She hopes Hoffman will find out all about it, that he will publish what he learns, that the wrongdoers will be undone. The discordant fact is that she, herself, is in a position to ensure all those things will happen. But she won't talk.

Reluctantly she surrenders a word, a nod of affirmation or denial, an oblique reference, but nothing more. Why? She doesn't know. If she would only say, Look, here's what's been going on, here's who's responsible, and here's the way to prove it, the whole sordid business would open up like a septic boil. But she won't talk. She is afraid without knowing quite what she fears. She is timid, she is retiring, she wants someone else to talk, she wants Hoffman to get up and leave. There is something so weak, small and fearful about her you want to get up and shout and grab her by the shirt collar and whip her with imprecations until she cracks open and tells what she knows. At least that's the way I felt. I don't know how Hoffman-Bernstein felt. What he did was to light another cigarette, summon a little smile, and try to put the question another way.

Fighting for scraps of information that way, from people who have it and hold onto it for reasons of instinct alone, is enough to wreck your equilibrium. After six months of it I suspect Woodward and Bernstein must have been ready for a three-week sleep cure in Zurich. If the rest of the Watergate story had unfolded in the same way I doubt they would have made it all the way to the end, and if their reporting for *The Final Days* had been of that sort, the book would never have been written.

It would be hard to exaggerate the sea change between the first Watergate stories in the summer of 1972, when it took so much work to establish the most basic facts, and *The Final Days*. The early Watergate stories were all but lost in night and fog; in *The Final Days* it is at least

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ten in the morning, if it is not quite high noon. From the first page, with Nixon's lawyers on their way to Miami in November, 1973, to persuade the President to resign, it is clear that this time Bernstein and Woodward's informants wanted to talk. They did not have to fight for scraps; they were all but inundated with information, not just who said what to whom, under what circumstances, but with people's moods, thoughts, fears, resentments and loyalties. With one or two exceptions (which I'll go into in a minute), the book is all of a piece, with a constant theme and point of view supported by the densest sort of circumstantial detail. Nothing in the book is directly attributed but in most cases it is fairly clear where things come from. I do not insist that in every instance without exception the authors have gotten things exactly right—the very words as they were spoken—but I do say an awful lot of it would have to be wildly wrong for it to make much difference to the book as a whole. From beginning to end it is the story of an isolated man who refused to confide even—especially!—in his defenders. Because Nixon's lawyers insisted he had been telling the truth, it took only a proven lie to undo him in the end. If Woodward and Bernstein have gotten a quote or an atmospheric detail or a nuance of motive wrong here and there—and it would be amazing only if they had not—it cannot alter the truth of this larger event which unfolded over a period of two years.

The Final Days is the product of prepared minds, familiar with the evidence, and of sources who knew what happened and wanted the world to know. Not everyone talked, of course, but enough of them did to make the book something of a composite memoir. I cannot think of any other account of a political crisis from the inside which is as factually well-documented or as humanly dense. One could write a Ph.D. thesis on the sourcing of the book, and no doubt some day someone will, but there is better evidence of its accuracy than close argument. It is the overwhelming impression on almost every page of people talking. Woodward and Bernstein didn't make up all those details of circumstances and mood; the people involved wanted them to know. This is not to say that everything in the book was a free gift. Some scenes obviously had to be reconstructed with great care from many accounts, not all of them forthcoming. But the book as a whole clearly comes from willing informants.

I am making such a point of this because *The Final Days* has been most harshly criticized for what seems to me its strongest point, its authority as an informed history. Kissinger, Edward Cox, David Eisenhower and others have issued disclaimers of varying intensity and Woodward and Bernstein have been roundly attacked for presuming to read people's thoughts, for going easy on their informants, for taking fourth-hand accounts at face value, for treating backstairs gossip as a legitimate affair of state, and in general for twisting, distorting, slanting and otherwise getting things plain wrong. The first critic on the scene was William Safire, with an all but apoplectic column in which he concocted a "Woodstein" quote to the effect that, "We had to make a lot of it up, but there's two million bucks in it." Safire seemed to think better of this lame joke almost as soon as it was out but I suspect it accurately represents his true feeling, that there is something ghoulish in examining a political career so undeniably dead. It was less a history, he seemed to be saying of the book, than an exhumation.

Later Safire wrote a second column on the theory of reliability in quoting. It was interesting enough, but it's hard to see that it could do much more than raise some question whether Nixon said "What have I done? What has happened?" while beating his fist on the office carpet, or only something generally like it. Perhaps he said, "How could this have happened?" Or maybe it was, "What has gone wrong? How did this happen?" Someone emphasized the President's words to Woodward and Bernstein. I doubt that Bernstein or Woodward got them wrong in their notes, but it's certainly possible that their informant had garbled them slightly, or more likely in this case (since it seems that the account came from someone who heard it from Kissinger) the Bernstein-Woodward informant was passing on accurately what had been inaccurately related to him.

But in any event I am satisfied that Woodward and Bernstein put the words in quotes because they honestly think that's what Nixon said. Whether or not, in theory, they *could* have known what Nixon said strikes me as less significant than the fact no one has offered an alternate account, or flatly denied theirs. Kissinger, for one, is certainly in a position to deny without qualification that he saw Nixon the night before his resignation, or that he tried to reassure the President his genuine achievements would not be forgotten, or that Nixon suggested they pray, or that they did pray, or that Nixon cried. Larry Eagleburger might deny that he listened into Nixon's phone call to Kissinger later that night, or that Nixon sounded drunk, or that he heard Nixon ask Kissinger not to tell anyone "that I cried and that I was not strong." Nixon might issue similar denials. None of them has. I take their vaguer disclaimers of misemphasis as a confirmation of the central facts.

For some reason critics of *The Final Days* have centered on its methodology—just how did they find that out, anyway?—while ignoring a more legitimate charge. It seems to me that the book sometimes gets the facts right but the nuance wrong. Patrick Buchanan, for example, is described as one of Nixon's oldest and most loyal supporters. He is hard-headed and honest, quick to see why the June 23 tape was going to be fatal and angry it had been withheld for so long, but at the same time he is almost a member of the Nixon family. They trust and like him; Julie will accept things from Buchanan she will refuse to hear from anyone else, and

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Buchanan is hardly untouched by the destruction of a man he admires for a wrong so needless. So far, so good.

But then Woodward and Bernstein describe an incident in which Buchanan mimes the President erasing the 18½ minutes of incriminating tape. When he was done, they say, he "laughed uproariously." There's something wrong there. He may have mimed Nixon just as they say, and he may have laughed, but the nature of his relationship with Nixon rules out the possibility of his having laughed "uproariously." Bitterly or sardonically or in amazed, sick disbelief, perhaps, but not uproariously. It's no big deal, but all the same I think Bernstein and Woodward got it wrong.

In much the same way I think they have missed Kissinger. There are lots of Kissinger stories but he himself remains contradictory and elusive. By all accounts he is a mercurial man, but there must be some point at which the contradictions of his character meet. Bernstein and Woodward have not found it. I believe what they are telling me in a factual sense—that he said and did what they claim he said and did—but I don't think they understand the man, or the nature of his relationship to Nixon. In some profound way Nixon trusted Kissinger and I think Kissinger must have been touched by this trust, and must have returned it, and yet Woodward and Bernstein describe their relationship as all pique and ruffled feathers and spite and backbiting. It doesn't sound right. To put my doubts simply, I don't think you can take what Kissinger says at face value. When he refers to Nixon as "our meatball President" or says Nixon wants "a nuclear war every week," I'm not sure he ought to be taken as meaning just that, and only that. No doubt Woodward and Bernstein disagree. My point is not to straighten them out, but to show that the book has been little challenged where it is most open to argument, while at the same time loonily criticized for what is least in doubt.

The true quarrel that Safire and so many others have with *The Final Days* does not concern its accuracy so much (although accuracy is always a safe, and even high-minded target) as its taste. People don't like this book. Not just people who *do* like Nixon, but even a lot of those who don't, as well. It's interesting, and even illuminating (if you will accept the light as light), but it's not exactly fun to read. I do not think many readers will take actual pleasure in watching Nixon surrender point after point until there is nothing left and he almost wistfully hopes for death, or assassination, and even—perhaps (it is hard to pin down)—half-considers his own suicide. The isolation of the man is stunning. He has not slept with his wife since the early 1960s. He can speak freely—and then of flowers, birds, the weather, as well as the events of the day—only to a tape recorder or dictaphone. He drinks heavily and holds it badly. His friends are being ruined, and in general, the closer the friend, the greater his ruin. As the end approaches Nixon is sometimes frightening. There is a *götterdämmerung* spirit about his determination to fight it out if even a single senator will serve as ally. But in the next moment he sounds like a tearful schoolboy. They can beat him, but they can't make him cry uncle.

But of course they do make him cry uncle. They even make him cry, and it is not pleasant to watch. If it is painful to me, who thought Nixon should have been forced from office and was glad it happened, then how must it feel for his friends, allies and supporters to relive his defeat and humiliation in such merciless detail? The best way to get a sense of the pain they feel is to listen to their attacks on the book. In print they're bitter enough, but things I have heard in ordinary conversation are truly breathtaking. Part of their anger is compassion for Nixon. Can't you leave the man alone, they seem to be asking. Must you force his last allies to betray him by describing his final agony? Must you even tell the world that in the end his family turned against him too? But behind that compassion is a different sort of agitation, not anger at lies, but distress at the truth.

In the end I think the bitterness and doubts will fade, and *The Final Days* will be recognized for the astonishingly rounded portrait it is. I think it is safe to say that Nixon is a deeply flawed man, but until now it has not always been safe to say that there was strength and loyalty in him as well. No President ever hid himself so well. His supporters defended without liking him, and his enemies saw only his flaws. In *The Final Days* something of Nixon's whole character begins to emerge, not only his fierce persistence in the lie which undid him, but the strength which brought him to the White House, and which helped him to do things, once there, that no one had expected. This is obviously not the place to reargue Vietnam, detente, the rapprochement with China, the Sinai agreements and so on, but when those arguments resume they will center on a recognizable human being, rather than the old cartoons of his friends and enemies. There is is no other book like this about American politics, because no other reporters have gotten so close to their subject. Somehow Bernstein and Woodward won the trust of men who knew Nixon, and they have not betrayed them.

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THE WINDING UP OF WIDMERPOOL

NEIL BRENNAN

Hearing Secret Harmonies

ANTHONY POWELL

Little, Brown, $7.95

Twenty-five years ago Kenneth Widmerpool trotted into *The Music of Time,* striving by sheer will to propel himself into athletic eminence at an Etonian public school. He was not to achieve that in *A Question of Upbringing* (1951). Notoriety, yes. Fifty years later he has accreted barnacles of notoriety. In *Hearing Secret Harmonies* his installation as chancellor of a British university is covered by TV—and so is his being splashed with paint by angry students. But eminence eludes him, and now he trots out—out of his life, out of ours—twelve volumes and some three thousand pages later. One of the greatest characters in literary history has been created, one of the world's great novels has reached its end.

Many doubted in the 1950s that Anthony Powell could pull it off. Indeed, at times doubts must have haunted Powell as he passed his fiftieth birthday, then his sixtieth, then neared his seventieth with the way still stretched ahead. Today we all rejoice. This twelfth volume of *A Dance to the Music of Time* pulls the whole together in a triumph to equal Proust's final *"temps retrouvé,"* or Thackeray's "Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets . . ." or Shakespeare's—"the rest is silence."

Perhaps to the dismay of recent addicts, *Hearing Secret Harmonies* opens with the addition of new characters to an already formidable dramatis personae. An aging poet knit of sensibility and toughness (" 'Firmness, in any sphere, is ultimately the only thing anyone respects ") is counterpointed by a young magus (perhaps the reincarnation of the eerie Dr. Trelawney of *The Kindly Ones,* 1962) whose will to power exceeds even that of Widmerpool. The pattern is familiar: in *Books Do Furnish a Room* (1971) a glib BBC littérateur is a foil for the wracked but perceptive novelist X. Trapnel; in *Temporary Kings* (1973) a brash and booming American movie-producer balances the reticent Ivy League scholar Russell Gwinett. Both a poet and a business-man, Delavacquerie does not meet the guru Scorpio Murtlock, but both remain, to the end, vessels of strength and mystery. Scorpio twists together the mystic strands of earlier volumes into a Gordian knot of alchemy, astrology, cabalism, esoteric Buddhism, catatonic druidism and even herbology. And Scorpio uses this creed, his cult, his commune, his will to haul Widmerpool into a hell that seems to eliminate the need for any future existence, at least as far as Widmerpool is concerned.

Widmerpool has tried to ride every wave driven in by history, but always after the crest has passed. Venture capitalist in the late 1920s, fascist in the late 1930s, communist in the late 1940s, now in the early 1970s he seeks desperately the crest of the counterculture foaming up on the beach. A convert to alternative lifestyles, "Harmony" T-shirts and medallions, Lord Widmerpool turns the official residence granted him as university chancellor ("Call me Ken") into a hippie commune where drugs and sex rituals radiate "harmonious vibrations." From here they foray into philistia, to shock and outrage society, most comically when Widmerpool, now seventy, leads the two co-eds who spashed him with paint to stinkbomb the Donners Literary Prize award dinner. Professor Gwinnett has come from America to be honored for his biography of the novelist X. Trapnel, who once took Widmerpool's wife away from him; the same Gwinnett in whose seedy London hotel room Widmerpool's wife had committed suicide for love. But at the banquet Widmerpool tacitly forgives Trapnel and Gwinnett in announcing his conversion to youth:

> I take pride in ridiculing what is —or rather was—absurdly called honour, respectability, law, order, obedience, custom . . . [and] for bringing home to so large an audience the irrelevance of such concepts in this day and age . . . the wrongness of the way we live, the wrongness of marriage . . . the wrongness of education, the wrongness of government, the wrongness of the manner we treat kids like these.

Then the stink-bomb explodes.

Widmerpool looms into view finally at the wedding reception of one of Jenkins' nephews at Stourwater Castle, now a girls' school but over thirty years ago the scene of the mime of the Seven Deadly Sins in which Jenkins had posed as Accidie. It seems to be the final assembly of his generation: Umfraville and Flavia and Widmerpool, shadowed by the ghosts of Peter Templer and Charles Stringham, both killed in the war. Even the bride's grandfather had been in school with them—until his mash note to Templer, reported by Widmerpool, led to his expulsion. But as Widmerpool comes trotting across the field at the head of the disciples, he is accompanied by the one-time commander of the Mobile Laundry Unit in which Stringham had found "the soldier's art" (1966) a lieutenant drummed out of the army by Widmerpool. Scorpio,

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learning of the deed, has inflicted on Widmerpool an "unspeakable" penance. Widmerpool surprisingly glows to hear of the presence at the wedding of the first known victim of his officious malice and, clad in a blue gown, he pursues him through the guests to atone. The climax comes in wild burlesque as Widmerpool, groveling at the feet of the bride's grandfather, is tripped over and fallen upon by his former mother-in-law, Flavia, Stringham's sister, who detests him beyond any living soul.

The end of the dance comes beautifully. *A Question of Upbringing* had opened with Jenkins observing workmen around a fire, a tableau which suddenly resembled Poussin's painting "A Dance to the Music of Time" (now in the Wallace Collection in London). Fifty years later, retired to the west country, Jenkins is burning the detritus of the year and notes, among the newspaper scraps, one announcing the opening of an exhibition of Deacon's paintings, newly "discovered" by a former disciple of Scorpio's. Jenkins had not been able to make the opening, but two weeks later had approached the gallery, with workmen gathering around a fire in the wintry street, and inside had found Jean Templer, now the widow of an assassinated South American dictator. Visiting the gallery with her is a former husband who still does not suspect that Jean, while his wife, had initiated Jenkins into the mysteries of love, in *A Buyer's Market* (1952). And a theatre director in the party wonders where, in Ariosto's Valley of Lost Things, might be found the statue of "Truth Unveiled by Time" which he had sold to Deacon, in *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant* (1960). Jean does remember the first night of their affair, in her brother's house in Maidenhead, presided over by seascapes, now back in vogue, and planchette. She alludes to it with a smile, and Jenkins recalls her first invitation (" 'It's the bedroom next to yours. Give it half an hour. Don't be long' ") as she bids him goodby with cool and mysterious finality: " 'So nice to have met.' "

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English understatement reaches here an apotheosis. Time has erased the medieval, virginal saint of the narrator's earliest vision of Jean, leaving "one of those sad Goya duchesses," about whom the ultimate truth must remain forever veiled.

Yet another fire had almost consumed Stringham's Modigliani that very day, Jenkins learns; but the Modigliani had been salvaged at the last moment and is delivered to the gallery that evening along with the story of Widmerpool's last night.

The narrator's mind returns to the fire he is tending. The newspaper item which had recalled the last of Jean Templer and of Kenneth Widmerpool —first desire and first antipathy—falls out of his hand into the autumnal flames. "Even the formal measure of the Seasons seemed suspended in the wintry silence."

Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology

SALLIE McFAGUE TeSELLE

Fortress Press, $4.25 (Paper)

SCHUYLER BROWN

The close interrelation between revelation and proclamation makes the use of religious language one of the major problems of theology. The task of revitalizing the language of faith usually concerns itself with the "relevance" of traditional concepts. But, as Prof. TeSelle convincingly demonstrates, the problem goes far beyond this. For we are still laboring under the rationalistic prejudice that gives primacy to abstract thought, in the belief that the more abstract our discourse, the truer it is bound to be. But concepts are really only "dead metaphors," whereas metaphorical language, in which the objective and subjective aspects have not yet been split apart, is the mode of discourse which best mirrors the unity of body and soul in man. "Metaphor is the language of 'a body that thinks'; it is, therefore, neither an embellishment of language nor a primitive form to be superseded by conceptual language, but *the* method of human thought."

This general observation takes on particular significance when applied to the language of faith. For here the primacy of the metaphor arises not only from the nature of man, but also from the nature of God, as he is understood in the Judeo-Christian tradition. For though we may know *that* God is, we cannot directly know *what* he is. For Christians the unknown God is known only through the life and death of his Son, Jesus Christ, who thus becomes the "parable of God." The fourth evangelist declares expressly, "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of Father, he has made him known (*exegesato*)" (Jn 1:18). Jesus gives us the "exegesis" of God, and it is no accident that his favorite form of instruction is the parable.

The parable, as an "extended metaphor," uses the secular, everyday language of human experience, but it cracks the surface realism in order to give us a glimpse of something lying beyond it. As though through a screen or grid, we see something new and extraordinary which is not the direct object of affirmation at all. For example, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, God is never mentioned, and yet

> *"If theological reflection were to model itself . . . on parabolic stories, what would it be like? It would, I believe, not fear secularity, hiddenness, ironic distance, and indirection in the experience of coming to belief. It would not insist on open declarations or solid resolutions; it would realize that genuine human experiencing is so complex and intricate that such declarations and resolutions are often not possible and, if insisted upon, not honest. . . . The complexity, hiddenness, and skepticism inherent in human experience of anything cannot be denied, and they can be denied least when the experience in question is that of coming to belief."*
>
> —Speaking in Parables

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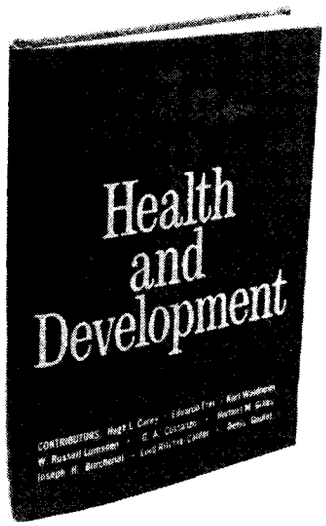
in what appears on the surface to be a worldly, sensuous story of human life, we have a profound statement about the mercy of our heavenly Father.

The reason why the parable is such an effective mode of religious instruction is that the insight that it conveys is altogether concrete. The parable is not an illustration of some timeless truth that can be learned in some other way. It is the vehicle of insight, an insight that leads to action. As the new hermeneutic insists, we do not interpret the parable. Rather, the parable interprets us.

Unfortunately, traditional theology has all too often forgotten that "beliefs come from believing; and believing is generated in experience" (Richard R. Niebuhr). A return to the experiential roots of faith is necessary if theology is to recover its evocative power, and for this the study of contemporary poetic language can be most helpful, even when the poets in question are non-Christians. For "good poets of whatever religious persuasion are a source for learning the way metaphor works to create insight." Prof. TeSelle's familiarity with contemporary literature is profound, and she has a true instinct for distinguishing those authors who maintain the concrete indirection of metaphorical language from those who lapse into allegorism or self-absorption. Today, at a time when the application of linguistic analysis to Biblical literature makes the conventionally trained exegete feel quite inadequate, I feel a deep gratitude for Prof. TeSelle's ability to communicate what she has to say about the way language works in a manner which a "layman" can understand.

Fascinated as I am by this book and by its implications for the renewal of theological language, I only regret that Prof. TeSelle is not less tantalizing in her suggestions as to how the return to the parable might affect the theologian. "If theology were to be truly parabolic in language, belief, and life, what would it be like? Would it be itself a parable? Perhaps." Is it impossible for theology to recapture something of the immediacy of parabolic language and still remain theology? Is it not perhaps something of an exaggeration to assert: "The only legitimate way of speaking of the incursion of the divine into history, or so it appears to this (Judaic-Christian) tradition, is metaphorically"? Surely the didactic mode is not foreign to Biblical literature, and its directness, while no substitute for the concreteness of the parable, is perhaps a necessary complement for a mode of utterance which, precisely *because* of its concreteness, must ever remain ambiguous. As long as the theologian remains conscious of the derivative character of his discipline, can he not make use of that degree of abstraction which is proper to "the science of faith"?

Furthermore, it might have been



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helpful to make clear that the experience that lies at the root of religious utterance can be of two kinds: the personal experience which leads to a generalized idea of the holy, and the experience of God in the history of a people or community which results in the disclosure of a concrete God. Does the distinction between the poem and the story, both of which are analyzed so ably by Prof. TeSelle, have something to do, perhaps, with this distinction between personal and historical revelation?

William Carlos Williams: Poet from Jersey

REED WHITTEMORE

Houghton Mifflin, $10.95

William Carlos Williams: The Knack of Survival in America

ROBERT COLES

Rutgers U. Press, $8.50

PHILLIP CORWIN

Students of American poetry, be seated. The doctor is in.

The doctor in this case is William Carlos Williams. And he is slowly becoming "in" among the academics, intellectuals and cultural traditionalists he mistrusted and decried—and at the same time whose approval he sought so strongly—throughout six anguished but fruitful decades of literary productivity. Yes, the small-town pediatrician from Rutherford, New Jersey is deceased but doing well, thank you. His prescription for immortality is being filled.

In the last decade alone, since his death (born in 1883, Williams died in 1963), countless articles, critical studies, Ph.D. theses, and full-length books have been written about him. This past summer two more volumes by well-known writers were devoted to him: a wonderful, empathetic and eminently readable biography by Reed Whittemore, himself a distinguished poet, and a disappointing and somewhat pretentious study of Williams' fiction by Robert Coles, the child psychiatrist.

A graduate of Horace Mann High School in New York in 1901, Williams went straight from there to Medical School at the University of Pennsylvania (where he met Ezra Pound, who became a life-long friend). The fact that Williams never had a traditional liberal arts education was held against him by many of his critics, who were either too clannish or too obtuse to recognize that literary imagination and talent do not have to be sanctified by college diplomas. Williams, meanwhile, never forgave them. For that matter neither Hemingway nor Faulkner nor Henry Miller earned college degrees —further evidence of the unfortunate adversary relationship between formal education and creativity in the United States.)

At one point Williams even made a book-length attack on the American educational establishment. But his book, *The Embodiment of Knowledge* never achieved a wide readership. (It was for Paul Goodman, Ph.D., years later, to say the same things Williams had said, and to say them much more cogently.)

Williams was always anti-academic in the sense that he believed poetry should come from experience rather than books, should incorporate natural speech rhythms rather than formal diction, and should be accessible to the average man rather than the scholar. He felt himself to be an American product rather than a transplanted European, a poet who looked to the present rather than to the past for inspiration. Accordingly, his arch-enemy, the man who typified all that

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REVIEWERS

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Williams opposed poetically, was T.S. Eliot.

Speaking of *The Waste Land,* Williams once said:

> I felt at once that it had set me back twenty years, and I'm sure it did. Critically, Eliot returned us to the classroom just at the moment when I felt that we were on the point of an escape to matters much closer to the essence of a new art form itself—rooted in the locality which should give it fruit . . . I had to watch him carry my world off with him, the fool, to the enemy.

The locality which in fact gave Williams fruit, as he says, was the town of Rutherford, New Jersey. And Williams' affection, which at times approached obsession, for local experience, has unfortunately led to a misreading of his achievements on the part of many of his admirers. The good doctor is constantly characterized as a uniquely American poet, as though his uniqueness were a national trait. It was not.

Williams drew from his personal experiences — as a pediatrician, father, husband, lover—but he was not limited by them. Who, after all is to say what it means to be an American? Was Eliot, self-exiled, who declared in *Little Gidding* that "History is now and England" any less of an American than Williams? I think not. Nor was Pound, who spent most of his adult life in Europe; nor was Frost, raised in San Francisco and a life-long resident of New England. Williams of course contributed to this myth by continually emphasizing his Americanness. "The pure products of America go crazy" he writes in one of his poems; the title of one of his books is *In The American Grain;* another is called *The Great American Novel.* And so it goes. Williams was concerned with being an American, particularly in that he was an anti-traditionalist and that the traditions he opposed were European. But his durability was that of an artist, not that of a mere American, alhough he was certainly an American product.

* * *

Williams' best writing was in his poetry, although he also produced criticism, historical essays, novels, short stories, and reams of correspondence. And it is in his poetry that one feels his personality: a vibrant energy, a tensile strength, an almost cranky romanticism, a love for concretion as opposed to abstraction ("Say it! No ideas but in things," he advises in *Paterson*), and a constant search for form. In places his poetry is kinesthetic, borrowing from both painting and music, almost as though he were mixing the senses in order to maximize their appeal, in opposition to the intellect. His best poems, meanwhile, are short ones, those that sustain a particular emotion, rather than those that are burdened with a narrative structure.

Randall Jarrell has said of Williams' poetry that his metrical demands were minimal, and his ideals of organization mosaic. True enough. At the

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same time, Williams at his weakest approached incoherence. There are times when the connections between images and ideas in his poetry are obscure, and the collage of the poem becomes an unrelated collection of objects, a body of limbs and nerve endings without a central nervous system, a Beautiful Thing (Williams' phrase) that is more Thing than Beauty. Richard Wilbur once remarked that at times Williams' poems seemed like notes to a text outside his poetry. Also true. But perhaps the best explanation is that Williams was a kind of Gestaltist who thought in terms of the whole reality, and tried through his poems to bring back pieces of that reality, leaving the connection between them to the reader. Whittemore in his book suggests that Williams adapted to his own use Picasso's technique of assassinating objects and then re-creating them. Possibly. But whatever his approach, Williams was a magician, and an innovator.

* * *

Reed Whittemore's biography of Williams is a pleasure to read, an inspirational rendering of an inspired life. First of all, there is the emotional dimension to his book. Amazingly, Whittemore is able to bring to life a wide range of Williams' own emotions: his elations, depressions, quackeries, generosities, struggles, guilts—his anguishings as well as his triumphs. In fact, Whittemore is such a sympathetic observer that his writing is actually most exciting when he is talking about the things in Williams' life that excited Williams most, and he is at his lowest ebb when he is describing Williams' least creative endeavors.

But as a whole, Whittemore's book stands up with distinction. When, at the beginning of Chapter 2, Whittemore recounts a visit to Flossie, Williams' widow, it is as though the reader is also present. The scene is dramatic, warm and evocative; it breathes. In short, there is a personal dimension to Whittemore's book that continually enhances the plethora of fact that any biographer can assemble.

Whittemore is particularly eloquent in talking about Williams' attitudes toward marriage and writing, and in depicting Williams as a kind of bourgeois rebel, a man who would have liked to reject society completely, but remained a professional man and a solid middle-class citizen right to the end. The truth is he was a kind of closet beatnik, a family man who was an orphan to classical European traditions.

Then there is the intellectual dimension to Whittemore's book. He is able to show with ease how Williams fitted in with his generation, how he responded to the great political issues of the times, and how he matured both emotionally and poetically. There are frequent, and always relevant, references to Ezra Pound, Robert McAlmon, H.D., Ford Madox Ford, and Louis Zukofsky. Williams was always "one of us," to borrow Conrad's phrase, at the same time that he was always his own man.

There is also the expected esthetic

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dimension to Whittemore's book. When he discusses particular poems of Williams', or Williams' concept of the variable foot (which was actually a variable line), he is absolutely first-rate in his appraisals and insights. When he talks of the influence Williams has had on succeeding generations—specifically on people such as Allen Ginsberg, Charles Olson, Denise Levertov, and Robert Creeley—one has the feeling that it was only modesty that prevented Whittemore from including his own name in that list. Not that Whittemore shows any direct debt to the good doctor; rather, that he realizes he is part of a literary landscape that is the way it is because of writers like Williams.

Finally, Whittemore's book is valuable for its little side discussions, such as the story of how Williams was ignominiously done out of assuming the post of Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 1952-3 (a post, incidentally that Whittemore himself held in 1964-5), due to a McCarthyite smear campaign that mistakenly made Williams out to be a Communist.

This is a very good biography.

If Whittemore identifies with the poet in Williams, Robert Coles identifies with the medical man who dealt with children, sympathized with the poor, and was at heart a writer.

Coles' book is about Williams' fiction, which included a volume of short stories, *Life Along the Passaic River*, and a trilogy of novels about an immigrant family, the Stechers, and their rise to wealth. Coles sees Williams as an outstanding social critic in his fiction:

> He is a novelist who has a sharp eye for that intersection of the private and the public which determines the moral character of human beings: how they combine their obligations to the demands of the world with their sense of what they want for themselves and those they call their own.

Coles' book, originally a series of lectures given at Rutgers, consists of a detailed exegesis of Williams' fiction. The trouble is that the exegesis is unnecessary—what happens in Williams' fiction is generally painstakingly clear—while Coles' inferences are highly suspect—namely, that Williams as a social critic can be compared with novelists such as Dreiser and Dos Passos. Unfortunately, Coles' book reads like that of a psychiatrist doing a socio-political study of fiction written by a poet. The result is confusing and pretentious.

Williams' trilogy of novels (*White Mule*, *In the Money*, and *The Build-Up*) is regrettably little more than crude proletarian naturalism with a Horatio Alger ending: European immigrants (husband Joe from Silesia and wife Gurlie from Norway) who work hard, and live tough, eventually succeeded. They become wealthy, even though they lose some soul to materialistic America in doing so; that is the message, hardly an original one, and not even necessarily true.

Moreover, no amount of textual explication can overlook the fact that Williams' fiction is deadly to read. Though Williams' heart was in the right place when he wrote the Stecher trilogy (some of his short stories are far better than the novels), his pen was not. Coles' reading of the fictional trilogy is akin to trying to make Emily Dickinson into a masterful critic of nineteenth century American capitalism.

At best, Coles' book will force a rereading of Williams' fiction. That task may have its rewards. But as a writer, Williams' reputation will deservedly rest in his poetry. *There*, he was an original.

The Collected Stories of Hortense Calisher

Arbor House, $15

ROBERT PHILLIPS

The title of one of Hortense Calisher's earlier collections, *Extreme Magic*, is an apt description of her legerdemain with the short story genre. The *Collected Stories* should regain readers for the author, readers

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who have found it difficult to keep the faith after experiencing her recent novels. (This reviewer found it difficult to praise Calisher from the advent of *Journey from Ellipsia,* that novel-length work of speculative fiction; others I know hung in there until the seemingly endless novel *The New Yorkers.*) What *The Collected Stories* makes clear is that Hortense Calisher not only is best at writing short stories, she is one of *the* best.

The collection is formidable in length as well as skill: 502 tall pages long, it contains thirty-six stories, all those she wishes to preserve. It does not, alas, contain her novellas—"Tale for the Mirror," "Extreme Magic," "The Railway Police," and "The Last Trolley Ride." Presumably they would have made the present book too large. Probably Ms. Calisher feels that a novella is a *novella,* and not a long short story: "A story is an apocalypse, served in a very small cup," she writes in her useful and autobiographical Introduction. Given that definition, a novella is no demi-tasse. Either way, perhaps her publisher will someday be sufficiently canny to package *The Collected Novellas of Hortense Calisher.* (If and when he does, the blurb-writer for the jacket should be cautioned to be a trifle less effusive; as good as the *Collected Stories* is, it may forgivably fall short of the dust-jacket's description as "a signal event for the language and the short-story form.")

The Collected Stories combines the short work from all three of her previous collections, plus a story new to book form. It also prints for the first time as a group the highly autobiographical "Hester" stories which, taken together, form nearly a novella in themselves. Of all the things to praise, plot is not one. Her story lines often are fragile, if not non-existent. This is because in her fiction incident is subordinate to insight. The landscape of her stories is more often than not a psychescape of the protagonist. It is impossible to overpraise the psychological acumen which the author brings to each story. She understands "the animal self-possession of the very handsome"; the "malpractices of the rich and worn"; the regret of "a life spent among values despised"; "the shiny readiness" with which we cover the segregation of Self; the ruses practiced by those "preserved in the amber of the status quo"; the narcissism of the analysand; the frustration of those doomed always to exist on the fringe of things. She writes with understanding of the persons who have "a homing instinct for the vitiated, the in-between," and of the persons who live alone and who come to feel "that only one's own consciousness held up the world, and at the very same time, that only an in to the world, or a recognition from it, made one continue to exist at all."

One must also praise the beauty of Ms. Calisher's language. Not since Elizabeth Bowen has such gorgeous prose been employed to spin a tale (and Bowen, like Calisher, seems to have studied the figures in Henry James's carpet.) A pair of descriptions each for people and places demonstrates Calisher's linguistic care: "her long hands lay in one's own like a length of suet just out of the icebox and her upper teeth preceded her smile"; "she looked the way a tired, pretty woman, of a certain age and responsibilities, might look at the hour before dinner, at the moment when age and prettiness tussle for her face, and age momentarily has won"; "the train creaked through the soft, heat-promising morning like an elderly, ambulatory sofa;" "It was that perilously soft hour of all great cities in the spring, when the evening rises to a sound like the tearing of silk and it is better not to be alone, to have some plan."

Ultimately one must praise Ms. Calisher's range. She writes of the urban and the suburban, the adult and the adolescent, the male and the female, the historical past and the hysterical present. Her most persistent theme is failure—of love, of marriage, of communication, of identity. One of her singular abilities is to link or re-

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late the individual defeats of her protagonists to the defeat of traditional social and moral values in the world at large, a world which has either progressed or regressed to the point of ignoring or defeating former standards of behavior or excellence.

While her range is great, this is not to say Ms. Calisher does all things equally well. The stories of adolescence, for instance, seem less successful than those of the adult world, perhaps because she allows sentiment to shift into sentimentality, an emotion which totally underpins at least one tale, "A Wreath for Miss Totten." The entire "Hester" group—comprising about a third of the book—seems less significant than the adult stories in the first and last sections. I am also less fond of her fantasies than her realistic tales; the one story which should have been omitted altogether, "Heartburn," is a Roald Dahl-like trick which entertains but does not enlighten.

This still leaves many stories to praise. If asked to list favorites, I'd cite the following ten as her best: "In Greenwich There Are Many Gravelled Walks"—a beautifully-realized tale of loneliness; "The Night Club in the Woods"—concerning the distances which grow between loved ones; "The Hollow Boy"—in which an ignorant family attempts to keep their son ignorant as well; "Old Stock"—about anti-semitism; "The Rabbi's Daughter"—on the death of impulse; "What a Thing, to Keep a Wolf in a Cage!"—a symbolic story of pent-up passion and human loneliness; "So Many Rings to the Show"—on the trials of a loving heart; "Night Riders of Northville"—an extraordinary study of incorrigibility; and those two famous stories, "In the Absence of Angels" and "The Scream on Fifty-seventh Street"—both concerning human responsibility and irresponsibility.

Others, such as "Il Ploer Da Mo Koeur," are beautifully constructed but slighter. Nevertheless, in story after story, Hortense Calisher displays a sensibility full of grace, compassion, and insight. Let us hope she continues her dedication to the shorter form in the years to come.

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Steinfels (Cont.)

act of becoming an Episcopalian John Cogley seemed like the last example of a passing and noble Catholicism. There is much to be written about him that others who knew him well will have to write. For me he was a hero, now a fallen one, someday a risen one.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(*Continued from page 291*)

when queried, omitting the whole list next time.

My own long-ago experience in covering campaigns would raise some excuses for the correspondents—the candidates do evade serious issues most of the time, or they deliver a standard speech in which they try to supply a new paragraph. This does mean that correspondents wind up padding stories with whatever color they can find. There is often an effort to try for fairness by giving each candidate a story of his own, or an equal amount of space for each candidate in a round-up, and such mathematical effort can involve a lot of air in stories.

But you are absolutely right that we do need to know about issues. I do think *The New York Times* tries hard to bring out what it can from reluctant campaigners, and we do try periodically to use some stories making comparisons on claims and promises. And then you have another problem—whoever gets elected doesn't do much about whatever he or his platform promised, and we just keep operating on opportunism in government unless we're in crises, when things get even tougher. PETER KIHSS

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